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# MUCH TO BLAME,

## A TALE.

BY A CELEBRATED AUTHOR.

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" Lessons of wisdom have never so much power over us as when they are wrought into the heart through the ground-work of some story which interests our passions."—STERNE.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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# MUCH TO BLAME.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Again she wrote, and as follows:—

"One letter more from Norfolk, and then, hey for home! and one other place, Julia! I really think I am very amiable in staying here so long without a murmur, considering the visit I have in prospect, and being so merry and cheerful too,—too merry, for I, you know, am never merry and wise. I am ashamed to tell you what I was caught doing yesterday; you must know that I was standing at a gate in the park, waiting for Sophia, when not supposing I could be caught, I amused myself, as you have often seen me, with jumping over this gate; not having been in practice lately, as I really am eighteen and a few

weeks, I was awkward at first, but at length I was as able as formerly to put my hand on the top bar and vault over! Courage, said I to myself, I am not an old woman yet! and so, delighting in my recovered agility, I went over and over, not looking to the right or left, when, as I alighted on my feet the last time, I beheld, with shame and confusion of face, the Rev. John Sumner, his curate, and the blushing Sophia!—the said John's expression of countenance I did not like, but then he is a man of this world, not of the other. His curate blushed celestial, rosy red, and modestly walked on, and the rector's blush, if he blushed at all, was any thing but celestial; but his words were a good lesson to me. 'I am glad,' said he, 'that your ladyship's exertions were not seen by any of my fair and young parishioners, as the example of a lady of quality is a seducing one, and might lead to broken bones, unless the conciousness of not being able to make so beautiful a display as Lady Helena Fortescue, might prevent such daring

exploits.' Now the first part of his speech was sensible, the second impudent:—what right had he to insinuate that he saw my ankles, and that they were good—but I had drawn the impertinence on myself; I therefore replied to the first part of the speech only; 'I thank you,' said I, 'for your reproof! Lady Helena Fortescue ought to set a good example only, and always, nor will she in future do when alone, and as she believes unobserved, what it would be dangerous or improper for any one to copy.' 'Indeed,' cried Mr. Sumner, 'I did not presume to censure your Ladyship.' 'But you ought to have done so, else why do you wear that coat and that shovel hat? their colour and shape invest you with a privilege which you ought to use, and admonish the giddy and the rash in whatever class of society you meet them. There, sir, there is my admonition in return for your's. He bowed gracefully, said something flattering, and I changed the conversation. Mrs. Sumner he said was ill, and could not accompany him:—for ill

I read sulky. He did not see the master of the house, as he was riding out; but he left his card, and I dare say the visit will be for some time at least unreturned. But, Julia, what have I done? oh, if it should ever be known at Green Hills that I was caught jumping over a gate, what would the consequence be! why, that though invited thither once, I should never be invited again.—What demon whispered in my ear, Helena, jump over that gate? I wonder whether I should have obeyed it, if I had not been sure of going to Green Hills.—I cannot answer that question—but this I know, that if I am not pretty behaved, and if I do not look at my Ps and Qs as the saying is, I shall never get to Green Hills a second time, spite of the obligations which a certain viscountess thinks she owes me. Heighho! well, here end my adventures in Norfolk. To-morrow we set off for Surrey and its beautiful hills; this place is very pretty; fine trees and water, but a dead flat, and our own hills are so lovely! I long to see them again; also, certain hills

which I saw the other day—can't you guess where? I also long to see, and kiss once more that dear, pretty, pale face, which I have long loved, and shall, I trust, love to my grave; can you guess whose face that is—not you, foolish child!—I have done.

" H. Fortescue.

" P. S.—Sophia writes for herself."

Oh! my joy at having seen with my own eyes that Sophia has quite conquered her first love, and that first loves, therefore, can be entirely conquered, when the feelings are under proper regulation, and the regulating voice of religion is allowed to be heard in the soul. I have had a letter from Aston; he found his wife too ill to be moved, so the journey to Nice is delayed. When the hour fixed for the departure of the Brightwens and their noble guest arrived, Mr. Brightwen had already so involved himself in business, and plans for improving his estate and house, that he declared to be unable to set off, and must make his way to London alone, and as well as he could. The ladies were, therefore.

obliged to go without him, a change which was not unwelcome to them, as the longer Mr. Brightwen remained in Norfolk, the longer was Sophia sure of staying with Lady Helena, and of accompanying her to Green Hills; for, till her father went to settle his affairs finally in Derbyshire, he would not require her attendance.

They found Julia as they left her, except that whatever was her secret cause for uneasiness, the sorrows of the daughter were now uppermost, as Sir George was declining fast. "But where is Marcus?" cried Lady Helena.

"I persuaded him to go to Laurel Grove," replied Julia, deeply blushing. "I thought the melancholy, monotonous life he led here was not good for him; I therefore sent him away," she added, forcing a smile.

"Amazing!" said Lady Helena, thoughtfully. "How could he be persuaded to leave you at a moment like this? and how could you be so unjust to him as to suppose he thought it otherwise than delightful to be with the woman he loves in the hour of

her affliction—to soothe and support her by his presence!—fie, Julia, fie! he does not deserve this from you."

Julia again tried to smile, but her lip could not; on the contrary it quivered with uncontrollable emotion, and she faintly replied, that she always dreaded becoming burthensome even to those she loved best, and she was very glad to send him to Laurel Grove.

Sophia, while this conversation passed, stood by silently and sorrowfully watching her countenance and manner, and soon after she led her into another room, in hopes of drawing from her the reason of the singular appearances which she observed; but she interrogated her in vain. Julia expressed her surprise that either she or Lady Helena should wonder at her lowness of spirits, when her father was so near his end, and at her want of selfishness in wishing the being she loved best to remove to a gayer scene, lest his health and spirits should be injured by witnessing daily her father's sufferings and her own;

and this was uttered with such a cold and firm manner, as if her determination to preserve a fixed silence was immoveable; that Sophia, conscious the attempt to obtain her confidence was fruitless, forbore to urge her further, and resolved to wait as patiently as she could, till time, the great revealer of secrets, should reveal this.

When Lady Helena and Sophia reached Laurel Grove, they found Lord and Lady Erpingham intended to set off in two days, time for Green Hills, and Marcus resolved to accompany them.

"You accompany us!" cried Lady Helena, when she was alone with him, "when poor Sir George has so few hours to live!"

"Is that certain?" said he, starting.

"So Julia tells me."

"Then what could she mean by sending me from her—I declare I cannot understand her; what does she mean—she makes me miserable; she seems to doubt my liking to be with her, and is at times so chilling in her manner, were I not sure

that she sees no one, I should think some one prejudiced her against me. Oh, Helena! I have not been used to be loved in this cold, repulsive manner."

"Perhaps not," replied Lady Helena; "but remember, Marcus, that the love which is so violent in its external seemings, is like the wide blazing-out flame of those candles you draw by, which soon burn out, consumed by their own violence. Whereas, a calm, gentle, pure love, like that of Julia, like a wax light, burns with steady, though bounded blaze, and will continue to burn purely and brightly to the last. The violent love which you prefer to her modest coldness, was not famous for its constancy, I think, Marcus?"

"I cannot bear any joking on that subject, Helena; but is it necessary that modest love should be cold?—would there be any harm in a woman's showing, beyond a doubt, that she returned the generous warmth of the virtuous attachment professed for her by an honourable man? besides, she was not always so cold as she now is,

and I sometimes suspect that she is really tired of me, and not afraid lest I should grow tired of her."

"This is strange and mysterious," said Lady Helena; "and I cannot understand it, but I do not approve of your going to Green Hills, and I feel sure that you are going more from pique than inclination."

"I believe so too." However, Fortescue could not put his design into execution, as he received a few hasty lines from Julia that day, saying, that she feared her father was dying, and conjuring him, as he wished to see him, to come to them as fast as possible.

"Is that a cold note, Marcus?" said Lady Helena, as she returned it to him.

"No; but grief softens the heart; however, I own, this note delights me, by the tenderness of its expression. Dear girl! I wish I could fly to her—horses are slow animals on such occasions."

Sophia wished much to accompany him to London, but could not, as she knew she would not be allowed to be the

guest of Lady Villeroy, and could not force herself, even during the day, on a woman who disliked her; but she agreed with Lady Helena, that it would be better for Julia, under all circumstances, to be thrown entirely on Fortescue for comfort and support; as nothing was so likely as the consciousness of that dependence to remove the coldness of which he complained, and to produce that confidence so necessary to the happiness, and continuing attachment of lovers. Before the party set off for Green Hills, they had the satisfaction of learning, by a hasty letter from Fortescue, that Sir George was better again.

As Lady Helena approached Green Hills, the vivacity which had amused her companions during the journey, and had delighted Mr. Brightwen and Sophia at Rosewood, was totally vanished, and she was silent, grave, and evidently absorbed in her own reflection; no wonder! for she who, when she last beheld that beautiful valley, was not allowed to explore its beau-

ties, because she was obnoxious to the possessor of them, was now coming to receive from that severe and dreaded woman, the tenderest welcome of an awakened and grateful heart—a welcome earned by her by the active and generous performance of the most trying duties of Christian love. Nor were her companions more inclined to converse than she was, for reflections, like her's, were in a measure present to their mind; and while a feeling of proud approbation of her conduct, swelled consciously in the bosom of her parents, they looked on her with delighted tenderness: and the tearful eye of Lady Helena fell under their overpowering gaze. She had scarcely recovered the emotion which had deepened the delicate tint of her cheek, when she saw the impatient Lord Restormel coming to meet them on horseback, every fine feature beaming with pleasure, and illumined by the blushes of triumph and satisfied feeling.

Lady Restormel, too full of emotion herself to preserve her usual state, came

forward even into the hall of entrance, to meet her noble guests, and while her arms opened to receive and welcome Lady Helena, her full heart deprived her tongue of utterance, and the meeting and the greeting passed in expressive silence—a silence which the heart of each understood and enjoyed.

Lord Restormel, meanwhile, evidently full of unutterable emotions himself, stood looking on, unable to follow the earl, and countess, and Sophia; and when his mother released Lady Helena from his arms, he seized the hand of the latter, and pressed it, unreproved, to his lips and his heart.

"I know you will pardon our neglect of the usual courtesy to guests," said Lady Restormel, as she now followed Lady Helena into the drawing room, "on account of the feelings which could alone occasion it; and you cannot doubt that you are welcome to Green Hills!"

"The feelings to which you allude are guarantees of that," replied Lady Erping-

ham; "and my lord and I are never sorry to be neglected for Helena."

"How you flatter that girl," said the earl, laughing: "I assure you I am not so humble, countess. It is not so pleasant to be neglected for any one!"

Lady Helena thought the same, for at that moment she felt herself neglected for Miss Brightwen, and she did not like it!

The animated manner in which Lord Restormel was now welcoming Sophia, and the admiration with which his eyes were fixed on her face, gave a jealous pang to her heart, and she feared she had brought a rival with her. She forgot that those who are dear, or distinguished by the object of our love, become instantly objects of interest to us, therefore she failed to see that if Lord Restormel welcomed her friend with such eager pleasure, it was from the charm that her being Lady Helena's friend threw over her, and that even Sophia shone to him with only a borrowed light! But the love which is not quite sure of being happy love, is always timid and dis-

trustful, and by the time that the ladies retired to dress, Lady Helena had convinced herself that Lady Restormal, spite of gratitude, would still never approve of her for the wife of her son; and that the daily contemplation of a woman who excelled in all the modest and feminine graces, and who had, she knew, gained such great power over her father, and her brother, was very likely to obtain equal ascendancy over Lord Restormel, and with the approbation of his own judgment. It was therefore with a heavy heart that Lady Helena retired to her own apartments, nor could she summon resolution to dress, but leaning her head on her hands, she sat for some minutes lost in painful contemplation: while thus engaged, she heard herself called, by a soft yet manly voice, beneath an open window which led into a balcony. It was Lord Restormel's voice! and starting up with agreeable trepidations, she hastily brushed the gathered tears from her eyes, and hastened into the balcony, whence she saw him looking up at her, with eyes whose

expression could not be mistaken, and holding up to her a nosegay of the choicest flowers! "Will you deign to accept my offering!" cried he. "I bade these flowers bloom till you came, and for you; that was all I asked of them, and they have obliged me."

"Oh, they are beautiful! but how shall I get them, I will send Gibbs down for them."

"No, let me bring them to the door of the dressing-room."

"I am sorry to give you so much trouble."

"Trouble!"—The word was nothing—but the tone, the look with which it was said, carried peace and joy to Lady Helena's bosom. The nose-gay was brought and received with blushing consciousness on both sides. Lady Helena, all smiles and bustle, now summoned Gibbs to commence the work of the toilet directly; and when with her nose-gay in her bosom she entered the saloon, and especially when she saw that she alone was decorated

with flowers, all her jealousy vanished, and again, before her view—

"Hope enchanting smiled and waved
her golden hair!"

The enchantment was encreased when Lady Restormel said, "How is this Charles? you have neglected to give a bouquet to Lady Erpingham and Miss Brightwen!"

"I fear," he replied, consciously blushing, "that I have almost exhausted all my best flowers for Lady Helena, but I will see." Accordingly he disappeared in the conservatory which joined the drawing-room, and returned with some flowers like those he gave her; but, as if still resolved that she should out-bloom the others, he brought a scarlet camelia, which he begged her to wear in her dark tresses.

"You might have brought one for Miss Brightwen, my lord," said the earl, "it would become her dark tresses also!"

"But Miss Brightwen, sir, is in mourning," was his reply:—and Lady Helena no longer jealous, was satisfied that if Sophia had not been in mourning, no camelia would

have been brought for her. The evening was one of intellectual enjoyment, for every one present enjoyed, and was formed for intellectual conversation, and as Lady Helena's vocal powers were inconsiderable, and her instrumental ones not much beyond them, and as Sophia had no musical knowledge whatever, the conversers were spared the pain of being interrupted in an interesting conversation by the usually unwelcome news that they were to be favored with a song. The evening was spent chiefly in the library—one of rare books—and on the tables of which were drawings by various masters, and portfolios of the rarest prints—while on the top of the books were ranged portraits by the first masters of those time-honored men, whose immortal minds were yet surviving in the instructive and entertaining works beneath them. It is delightful to turn from perusing a splendid passage in an author, to contemplate the face of him who produced it; and no one enjoyed this delight and this opportunity more than

Lady Helena. Innumerable sallies of playful wit or deep feeling therefore were elicited from her mind by the circumstances which surrounded her, and except when Lord Restormel particularly addressed her, her conversational powers never shone with greater brilliancy, till suddenly observing Lady Restormel's eyes intently and almost mournfully fixed upon her, her animation fled, her power of expression failed, and drawing her chair close to the table, she tried to hide her changed feelings by looking over some engravings from Vandyke. But why were her feelings changed? Because she fancied that Lady Restormel thought her too brilliant, and that, for her age, she came too forward in society—was too ready to give her opinion, and gave that opinion too positively, nor could she help contrasting her own readiness to harangue and to reply, with the modest reluctance, to speak and to decide, evinced by Miss Brightwen, whose judgment was, she knew, a judgment to rely on, and whose riper age and

maturer character gave her a greater right to do both with promptness and self-complacency. Her ever tender and watchful mother beheld her change of countenance, and was alarmed at her silence. Lord Restormel also observed both, but he dared not remark or enquire into the cause of either. He was therefore glad when the countess said—" Helena my love, what ails you on a sudden, are you not well ?"

" Oh ! yes, quite well," she answered, deeply blushing, " but it occurred to me that I had talked too long and too much, and that I had not been as much of a listner as it becomes my years and acquirements to be."

" I should have thought so too, perhaps, to borrow the elegant words of our late royal master to Dr. Johnson, if you had not talked, so well," said Lady Restormel smiling, and approaching Lady Helena as she spoke, then leaning affectionately on her shoulder, while she examined the print before her.

" But why, Lord Erpingham," she continued, " should not the young be encouraged to put forth their ideas? It is so delightful to contemplate the fresh and unsophisticated impressions of early youth! I declare to you that Restormel's speeches in the House, are not more interesting to me than his boyish and youthful observations, and *èpanchemens du cœur*, when nature and life were new to him, and I encouraged him to express all that he felt."

" But would this untaught eloquence have pleased you so well if intruded upon you by the child of another?"

" Perhaps not—yet wherefore?—The sight of nature and *le verd naissant* is equally lovely, whether it be seen in your park or mine."

" True, and what is more lovely than *le verd naissant*?" replied the Earl.

" Aye, and equally lovely is *le verd naissant* or budding green of the mind, my lord."

"But its autumnal tints are richer and more splendid!"

"Yes, but not so purely bright; like the consumptive cheek, they owe much of their beauty to decay, and time, which has added to their charm, has also injured their strength and their vividness. No, give me that freshness of hue and feeling, over which, as yet, the canker worm of care and sorrow has never crawled, polluting and deadening even where it does not gnaw and destroy; give me the heart-felt and glowing feelings and sentiments of this dear may-morning girl, she added, passing her hand over Lady Helena's fine forehead as she spoke, I like them far better than my own autumnal ones, and I am content to listen while she talks." Away fled Lady Helena's gloom and silence! she kissed the caressing hand as it glided off her brow, and with *le verd naissant* for her text, she amused herself and her auditors by her fancy and her illustrations. When she retired to rest that night, it was with feelings too full of ex-

citement to allow her to sleep soon, but when she did, her rest was sweet and her dreams happy.

The next evening Lady Helena, though allowed to talk as much as she pleased by her hostess, was unusually silent, for her heart would not let her converse—that heart was full, and full of treasures, namely, convictions of the excelling worth of the man she loved. Lady Restormel had driven Lady Helena in a low chaise round the grounds and the domain herself—a distinction of which the latter felt the full force—and while she admired the neatness and comfort of the cottages, and the admirable regulations of the infirmary, and schools for children and for adults, Lady Restormel had a mother's pride in saying, "All this is Retormel's doing! when he came of age he brought this addition to the property, and ever since he has laboured till he has brought every thing to the perfection which you see! Well, indeed, may I say of my son, in the words of scripture, 'that when the ear hears him, then it blesseth him, and when the eye

sees him, it gives witness to him, because he delivers the poor that cry, and the fatherless, and him that hath none to help him, and causes the widow's heart to sing for joy.'" Lady Restormel's voice faltered as she uttered this eulogy on her son, and Lady Helena could not speak a word.

"Now then," said Lady Restormel, "that I have shewn you all these interesting objects, and done that justice to Charles which he would have been too modest to do himself, I shall give you up to him for the rest of the drive, and take his present companions to see what I have shewn you. Here Restormel," she added, as the barouche in which he was came up, "hand me into your vehicle, and take my seat beside Lady Helena!" He did so, but they drove for some time in almost unbroken silence. Lady Helena wished to commend him, but could not. He wished to ask how she liked what she had seen, but dared not; besides, the conscious happiness each felt in being with the other, was alone sufficient to dispose them to silence,—till Lady Helena,

ashamed of her tell-tale silence, forced herself to speak of the pleasure she had just enjoyed, and gave him an opportunity of commending that admirable mother who had gone hand in hand with him in all his plans, and had ever given wise council, if she had not superintended and executed what he wished. But Lord Restormel's praises of his mother were not likely to raise Lady Helena's spirits, nor provoke her to converse; on the contrary, they subdued and appalled her; for the stronger and the more just she found his attachment to that excelling woman, the less likely he was to disregard her opinion in his choice of a wife, or when married, to make the woman happy who should not conform in every thing to his mother's views of what a wife should be. But at her time of life, gloomy anticipations of the future have not power long over the pleasures of the present moment, and delighted with each other, Lady Helena and her companion prolonged their drive till there was only just time enough to dress before dinner was on the

table. That evening Lady Helena and Lord Restormel talked apart more than they had yet ventured to do; but as I before observed, the former could not converse as she had done the preceding evening; yet, though not so animated and even pensive, she went to rest happier than she was the night before.

The next morning, Lord Erpingham in no little agitation, brought a letter sealed and bordered with black into the room where Lady Restormel, the countess, and Lady Helena were sitting, which he had just read, and in which Lord Aston announced the death of his lady. Lady Erpingham instantly burst into a paroxysm of tears! and Lady Helena also betrayed considerable emotion while the earl expressed his reluctance to shorten so agreeable a visit, but was sure, he said, that Lady Restormel would see the necessity of their returning home the next day, to prepare for the reception of Lord Aston and his children, and the remains of the deceased. From this imperious necessity

there was no appeal, and Lord Erpingham left them to go in search of Lord Restormel and Sophia, who were walking together; when he was gone, the countess loudly lamented the death of Lady Aston, and worked herself into an agony at the idea of the misery her poor, dear Aston was feeling at that moment.

"No doubt," said Lady Restormel, "he must feel a good deal at first."

"She was the mother of his children," observed Lady Helena.

"Aye, and a most tenderly beloved wife too, Helena. I assure you, my dear friend, there never was a better or a more devoted husband than Aston, or a more excellent wife than poor Emily! Oh, he will be so wretched!"

"Oh! he will recover it," cried Lady Helena.

"But when, Helena? not for a very long time I am sure; he will take it so to heart!"

"He will not grieve very long, depend on it, dear mamma," replied Lady Helena smiling through her tears in spite of herself,

and with an archness of expression which struck Lady Restormel as meaning more than was uttered; and taking her by the arm, she led her into another apartment.

"What does that smile mean, thou dear April-eyed being?" said Lady Restormel.

"That mamma is mistaken, and that Aston will even feel more relieved than grieved."

"So I suspected; for I never before heard that Lady Aston was so amiable and excellent as your kind mother describes her to be."

"No, certainly not; but to mamma's indulgent and generous mind, all persons and objects appear as through a *camera obscura;* and the most common-place persons acquire a beauty they do not really possess, from the medium through which they are viewed."

"True, but this mode of viewing things has its advantages; for instance, if Lord Aston should be as injudicious in a second choice, as he was in his first, your mother would not see the deficiencies of the

lady—but fancy her all she ought to be."

"If Aston marries, as he will, I think, wish to marry," replied Lady Helena eagerly, "there will be no deficiencies in the lady whatever; but she will adorn the coronet, and not the coronet her."

"What!" cried Lady Restormel, "am I to understand, that Lord Aston's second choice was made before the death of his wife?" Lady Helena was shocked, but she had gone too far to recede; she therefore gave Lady Restormel an account of the circumstances relative to Lord Aston, as before related."

"Then you really wish your brother to form a *mêsalliance;* do you, Lady Helena?" cried Lady Restormel, as soon as she had concluded.

"I do not consider it as a misalliance. Miss Brightwen, on the mother's side, is of a noble family, and on the father's descended from a very old family in Norfolk. Your ladyship knows that no fault of her own degraded her from her rank in society, and

that she is now restored to it by the acquisition of an hereditary property, large enough to make her an heiress worthy of a ducal coronet.

"I did not know; not but that I care more for family than wealth, though the world will only consider in this case the wealth, and neither the rank nor the virtues of the lady. I know you will believe me when I say that I rejoice to hear Miss Brightwen is so well born, as that removes all my objections, and makes her the most desirable of wives for a nobleman in my estimation; as there is no fear of her disgracing the rank to which she is elevated by any unbecoming eccentricity or unfeminine daring in her conduct or mind, but on the contrary her perfect manners and well tried virtues will reflect lustre on her station, and she will be what a British peeress ought to be." Lady Helena, though pleased to hear that her future sister-in-law, as she delighted to consider her, was approved by Lady Restormel, felt her eye involuntarily fixed on the ground,

and her colour change, for she feared that her noble hostess meant obliquely to censure her, while she applauded her friend; however, she did not choose to apply the censure to herself by noticing it, and she forced herself to say, with tolerable calmness, that after all Miss Brightwen might refuse Lord Aston.

"She is not at all attached to him as yet, of that I am sure," said Lady Restormel, "or I could not think so highly of her as I do."

"No, nor is she at all conscious of his attachment to her, even that consciousness would, I feel, have impaired the spotlessness of her character."

"True and delicately felt; but see, here she is! and has evidently been weeping."

"Oh, poor Lord Aston!" cried Sophia, as she entered, "I am so sorry for him! how he will suffer!"

"Who tells you so?"

"Lady Erpingham! she says he was so attached to Lady Aston!"

"But I told you the contrary, and you know I see clearer in some respects than mamma, as I have not her good nature to blind me."

"Well, but he must feel her loss, and the suddenness of her death."

"Yes, certainly, but he will recover it much sooner than mamma thinks."

"However, Lady Helena I am very glad he is coming immediately to Laurel Grove."

"So is he, I dare say."

"No doubt, for there he will be soothed and comforted."

"To be sure he will."

"We shall all do our best to support him under his trials; and I hope my father will not call me away for some months yet, on poor Lord Aston's account."

"You do! that is very kind in you, and I dare say Aston will find you a great comfort to him."

"I shall endeavour to be so, for many near and dear reasons," replied Sophia, sighing.

"And no doubt you will succeed in your endeavours," said Lady Helena, in so queer and comical a tone of voice, that she made herself as well as Lady Restormel smile, and they were both forced to turn away to hide their countenances from the unconscious Sophia. But this was almost the last tendency to smile, experienced by Lady Restormel that day, on account of the unexpected departure of her guests, which was fixed for noon on the following day.

Lord Restormel, next morning, was dressed and ready to attend Lady Helena and Sophia, according to appointment, in a walk round the grounds before breakfast. The weather was cold, and the trees leafless, two disadvantages of which poor Miss Brightwen was fully sensible, but her companions saw only each other, felt nothing but the delight of being together, and when she assured them it was, indeed, the breakfast hour, she could with difficulty convince them that she spoke the truth.

After breakfast, and while Lord and Lady Erpingham were writing letters to meet Lord Aston in London, Lady Restormel asked Lady Helena to accompany her in a drive, as she was obliged to visit a poor invalid, and wished to have her company part of the way. Lady Helena gladly prepared for the drive, and having handed his mother and her fair guest into the chaise, Lord Restormel followed them on foot.

Lady Restormel, who seemed absent and agitated, now took the road which led to the Reed House; and when they reached the well-remembered gate, the servant unlocked it, and Lady Restormel said, "We will alight here, if you please." They did so, and Lady Helena found herself sitting, by the invitation of the mother, on that very seat which not many months ago, she had so reluctantly, and with such conscious trepidation, occupied by the side of the son. She was full of conscious trepidation now, but it was of a pleasanter nature; she awaited with more hope than alarm at

what the equally agitated Lady Restormel was, she saw, about to say: "You have been here before," she said, at length.

"I have; but much against my will."

"Yes, and you refused to point out certain desirable alterations, because you never chose to give an opinion concerning aught belonging to another."

"True; but how strange that you should know even the words I used."

"No; not when you recollect to whom they were spoken, and that the memory was that of the heart. Now, therefore, that you may have no scruples to prevent you from suggesting whatever alterations your taste points out, I give you this reed house; it is your property henceforth, and so are the trees around it."

"Lady Restormel! do I hear you aright?"

"You do, indeed; and I have also to say that there is an addition to, and an improvement in these scenes which you, and you alone can give; but hither comes Restormel, and to him I leave further

explanations." All this was uttered with a faltering voice and hurried manner, which communicated equal emotion to Lady Helena; but she little knew why Lady Restormel had brought her thither, and in order to speak what she did on that very spot. It was to substitute in her own, and in her son's mind, an agreeable association with that scene, for a disagreeable one; she had there spoken slightingly and unjustly of Lady Helena, and there she had now made, she trusted, sufficient amends to the beloved being whose feelings she had then wounded; for she had now contrived to make that very place the scene in which he would probably exchange the vows of mutual and happy love.

As soon as Lord Restormel entered the Reed House, Lady Restormel told Lady Helena she should call for her again in half an hour, and proceed on her drive. "May I not—should I not go with her?" said Lady Helena, scarcely knowing what she said, but moving towards the door.

"Do you not see why my kind mother left you alone with me," said Lord

Restormel, gently forcing her back again on the seat; "do you not guess the meaning of her last words when I appeared?"

Lady Helena did not attempt to reply; she could only look down, and tear into numberless pieces the flower she held in her hand; no doubt she did not remain silent till Lady Restormel returned, for when that lady re-entered the Reed House, she found her sitting with her hand clasped in Lord Restormel's, while he was looking up in her blushing, but not averted face, with a countenance of happy and admiring love. At sight of her they both rose, and Lord Restormel leading Lady Helena up to her, said, "Bless us, bless us together, dearest mother; if Lord Erpingham consents, I am the happiest of men."

An involuntary sigh burst from the bosom of Lady Restormel as he uttered these words, but a smile of heartfelt tenderness succeeded it, while she folded them both in her maternal embrace, and raising her eyes to heaven vainly endeavoured, for some moments, to give other utterance to

the blessing which her heart invoked, than that evinced by the fast quivering lip. Yet Lady Restormel had intended to be very eloquent, and to address them in words of solemn, affecting import—words not soon to be forgotten, but her heart more eloquent than her tongue, at once annihilated the prepared address, and told its own impressive dictates in tears, in silent prayer, and in affectionate embraces. "Now, then, to drive you home again," said she, when she had recovered her composure; but Lord Restormel would not allow it; it was, he said, their last walk together for some time, and Lady Helena must return with him.

It may be supposed that Lady Restormel had reached the house long before the lovers did, but as soon as they did arrive, Lord Restormel went in search of Lord Erpingham, Lady Helena to the apartment of her mother; the latter had nothing to reply to her beloved child's communications but congratulations and expressions of sympathizing pleasure, mingled, however, with tender regret at

thoughts of losing her. But different was the reception which Lord Restormel's proposals met from the earl; to the great disappointment of the lover, he assured him that though he and his offers were all the tenderest, and most mercenary parent could desire for his child, he had always resolved that Lady Helena should not marry till she was one-and-twenty, and that all he could do to show how much he approved the marriage now offered to her acceptance, was to depart in some measure from his resolution, and permit her to marry at twenty. "You know, Restormel," said he, "that Helena has not yet been presented; she has not had those opportunities of seeing and choosing for herself, which all young women, whose lot is cast in the world, ought to have before they settle for life, as it is called. I have no doubt but the more she sees of other men, the more she will feel your superiority; but though I am her father, I should not think I did her or you justice,

if I suffered her to become a wife, till by a longer collision with the habits of others, Helena had lost some of her own bad habits, the result of an erroneous education, or rather in some points no education at all."

"Oh! but her own fine understanding, and my wishes surely would correct."

"My wishes and my authority, my lord, have not entirely done so; and believe me that a married life begins under bad auspices, where the husband has a prospect of being forced to assume the character of a censor with his bride. Trust me, that I know Helena, and believe me that you will hereafter bless me for insisting on this delay, and that your present pain will insure your future felicity."

"I am surprised, mortified, and disappointed, my lord; but you allow me to consider myself as the engaged lover of Lady Helena."

"Why, not exactly so; I cannot, will not admit of an engagement on either side; you shall meet, and on lover's terms, as

often as you choose; but you shall both be free, and either shall be permitted to break off an intercourse which shall have become undesirable to either."

"I do not like your conditions, Lord Erpingham; but I am sure of my own constancy, therefore I shrink not from accepting them, and if the most tender and devoted attentions can make Lady Helena constant at the end of—— how long is the probation, my lord?"

"Only a year and a half."

"Well, then, in a year and a half I I hope to be the happy husband of your daughter."

"I trust you will be so, but to use a favourite phrase of Helena's, '*ne gagez pas!*'"

"Do not lay a wager."

The two lords then went in search of Lady Helena, whose countenance fell, as if she was oppressed with secret forbodings when she heard her father's conditional consent to the marriage, and her lover was consoled to find that the delay was as

painful to her as to himself; but it was from different reasons, for Lady Helena knew herself, and could indeed have replied to her lover's confiding hope as her father did, '*ne gagez pas.*'

Lady Restormel, on the contrary, highly approved the earl's decision in her heart, though she contented herself with saying, "There can be no appeal from your authority and decision, my lord, and I doubt not but the delay will be salutary."

Lady Erpingham murmured and wondered, but always inclined to yield her judgment to that of her lord's, she did not attempt to offer an objection, and Miss Brightwen did not feel herself justified in giving an opinion on the subject. Lord Erpingham's resolution was strengthened by his knowledge, how much and how justly, in some respects, Lady Restormel had been prejudiced against Lady Helena, and by his conviction that though powerful circumstances had converted her aversion into affection, yet that his daughter was too like her former self to make her sure

of retaining the mother's affections, however she might continue to charm the fancy of her son; and a mixture of pride and principle, and a knowledge of human nature, made him resolve to secure to each of the lovers an opportunity of escaping those fetters which might at length become burthensome.

## CHAP. XVII.

As Lord Aston, with his melancholy train, was expected so soon, Lord Restormel did not accompany his departing guests to Laurel Grove, though he was allowed to drive Lady Helena the greatest part of the way. With him vanished Lady Helena's vivacity; not that she was subdued in spirits by merely parting with him, because she knew that they should soon meet again either in town or country; but that she was then at liberty to indulge in her own reflections—her own blighted expectations; for though the beloved of Lord Restormel's heart, and his acknowledged choice, conscience whispered to her bosom that she was not the wife which either his own judgment or that of his mother would have chosen, and dark undefined fears for the future, clouded over, if they did not absolutely annihilate her prospects.

"Helena, my dearest child! why are you so absent and so sad?" said Lady Erpingham.

"So reflecting, I trust, you should say," observed her father gravely. "Helena has to-day taken on herself new obligations; she has in her heart at least plighted and accepted the most important of all vows save one, that at the altar; and the woman who knows that an amiable and honorable man has entrusted his happiness to her keeping, ought to reflect, for she has to weigh well her conduct in future, and to take heed to her steps;—am I not right Helena? are you not sad because you feel deeply and properly the responsibility which you have incurred?" Helena's heart was full—she could not answer, but she pressed her father's hand, and inclined her head in token that he was right. It was fortunate for Lady Helena's peace, and a fine trait in her character, that she was always able to forget herself in the interests of others; and the next morning, her own disquiets were swallowed up in the

preparations she made for the reception of Lord Aston and his children, and for their future accommodation. Lady Helena was the only person in the family whose expectation of Lord Aston was one of nearly unmixed pleasure, for she knew the state of his heart, and she had never liked Lady Aston, because she had always thought her unworthy of her brother, and she knew also that she made him miserable. When he arrived, however, and gave his motherless children to her arms, her awakened feelings towards them, made her shed unfeigned tears, though they were not tears of tender regret for the deceased, and without any hypocrisy on her part, she appeared a mourner with the rest. Lord Aston himself, from mixed feelings, and various causes, betrayed considerable emotion and agitation on his arrival, both of which were attributed, by all observers but his sister, to grief for the loss he had sustained; and Fortescue, who arrived just before him to attend the funeral, but returned to London again directly, was

surprised to witness such evidences of strong feeling, as if of regret in his widowed brother, which the merit of the wife he had lost did not at all in his opinion call forth. But no subsequent violence of emotion in Lord Aston's manner excited any observation, or wonder in those around him; and when the interment was over, no one but Lady Erpingham could have remarked that his countenance was more serious than usual; but as she over-rated the merits of the deceased, it was natural that she should over-rate the grief of her husband; while Miss Brightwen, from respect to Lord Aston, because she thought that it was wrong for the husband of so tender a wife to be soon consoled, tried to see with the eyes of the countess, and to impute Lord Aston's occasional absence of mind, though his eyes were often fixed on her the while, to regret for the companion whom he had lost. And she was confirmed in this opinion, when, after Lady Aston had been dead two months, she suddenly came upon Lord Aston, in a bower in the garden, and

found him gazing on a picture very intently, and then saw him press it to his lips. On observing this, Sophia instantly retreated, unwilling to interrupt him in these moments of tender recollection; for she naturally concluded that the picture was that of his wife. She would, however, have still more hastily retreated, had she known whose picture it was.

Lord Aston was now eager to resume his morning walks with Sophia, before breakfast, in spite of the coldness of the season, and his mother's fears for his health: but, as his circumstances were now changed, she was not often willing to indulge him, even though the death of his wife was an event too recent to make it possible that there could be any great impropriety in such walks, she was, however, much more willing to oblige Lord Aston by taking notice of his children, those children named after her beloved brother, and whom that circumstance tended to endear to her, and she could not but observe that whenever those interesting children were the objects

of her attention and caresses, that the father's countenance beamed with affectionate delight, and that his eyes were fixed on her with an expression which hers were unable to meet. And yet, thought Sophia to herself, I caught him caressing his wife's picture! To be sure it is my own conceit alone that thus embarrasses me when he looks at me! But was it his wife's picture? Yet, if not, whose should it be? The truth was, that soon after the funeral of his lady, Lord Aston asked Lady Helena whether she had given the picture he had intrusted to her care to Miss Villeroy.

"Certainly not," was her reply. "I was only to give it to Fortescue's bride, not Miss Villeroy."

"True, then give it to me again."

Lady Helena obeyed; and restored it, with no comment, but a smile of great meaning and pleasure, accompanied by a pressure of the hand, which was forcibly returned, and which spoke all which circumstances then warranted. I need not

add, that it was on this picture Sophia found Lord Aston gazing. Not long after this circumstance had taken place, she mentioned it to Lady Helena, as a proof of Lord Aston's tender attachment to his wife's memory; and the ambiguous expression of the latter's countenance, embarrassed her exceedingly.

"You do not reply, Lady Helena, and you look, I cannot say how."

"Very likely; but my dear friend, are you sure that it was Lady Aston's picture?"

"If not hers, whose should it be?"

"Aye, whose indeed? You know I told you he gave me yours to give to Julia."

"Yes, and if not, it could not be; that is, no, surely not."

"I do not quite comprehend you, Sophia; you do not speak with your usual clearness; but, who knows but my brother may have a picture we know not of. Those Italian women are very charming."

"An Italian woman's picture! and gaze

on it so soon! do you remember how recently his wife died?"

"Yes, and also how long she lived with him too,—quite long enough, to make the contemplation of another face very agreeable to him."

"Fye, Lady Helena, you really do not do your brother justice."

"Oh, yes, I do, and I am convinced, to speak seriously, that the picture was that of a virtuous English lady."

"Do you know, or only suspect this?"

"I may say, I am sure of it."

"But so soon to form a new attachment?"

"I did not tell you it was a new attachment."

"Worse and worse!"

"My dear Miss Brightwen, you are a wise woman, but not at all quick-sighted; nevertheless, and I challenge you to walk with me directly to yonder bower!" Sophia consented; and as Lady Helena had foreseen, there was Lord Aston with the picture in his hand.

"O! Brother! Brother! what are you

doing?" cried Lady Helena, as she entered, "what idol are you worshipping there? see! Miss Brightwen is shocked at your heathenish, or catholic proceedings!"

Lord Aston, who had only smiled when his sister first spoke, and had not tried to conceal the picture, started and blushed, when he saw by whom she was accompanied,—but still, he was so slow in returning it to its hiding-place, that Sophia had sufficient time to see that it was the miniature of herself! and overwhelmed with an embarrassment too mighty to be concealed, yet one, which every feeling of delicacy and propriety made her desirous of concealing—she suddenly quitted the bower, and luckily seeing Lord Aston's children approaching, ran forward to meet them—glad of such an excuse for leaving her companions. From that hour, however, Sophia ceased to caress the children in their father's presence; and Lord Aston would have feared that she had lost the attachment to them, which it had delighted him to behold, had not he learnt from their artless communications, that, in his absence,

she was as attentive to their wants and wishes as ever. Then why this comparitive coldness to them before him? Lord Aston's heart sometimes answered the questions in a manner satisfactory to his feelings, especially when he found Sophia's expressive eye, now, never responded to his fixed and impassioned glance; but her embarrassment of manner was soon accompanied by increasing coldness and reserve; and while his hopes were encouraged in one way, they were utterly damped in another; he had also the mortification of hearing Sophia frequently wish that her father's affairs would allow him to settle quietly in Norfolk, and summon her thither. Why this unkind haste to leave Laurel Grove? when Lord and Lady Erpingham seemed to delight in her society, and to love her as a daughter. To Sophia herself, there was a very sufficient reason for it, as she thought that Lord Aston's now evident attachment to her would not be approved by his own family; and she knew, on examining her own heart, that the longer she remained

exposed to his attention, the less able she should be to help returning the attachment. But we have too long lost sight of Julia Villeroy, who, when the hour at length arrived, so long and so painfully anticipated, found herself obliged to meet it unsupported by the hitherto soothing presence of her lover—as, only two days before her father breathed his last, Captain Fortescue was obliged to join his ship, and set sail to go against some pirates who infested the North Seas;—most reluctantly did he leave Julia, and the more so, because, during the parting hour, her reserve seemed to vanish entirely, before the strong evidences which he gave of his attachment, and his sorrow; and he was again convinced, that whatever was the cause which produced her coldness of manner, that her affections were still warmly his. Yes, in the presence of Lady Villeroy only, did Julia undergo the terrible pang of seeing those eyes for ever close, which had lately looked on her with all a father's fondness! and spite of the prospects which seemed to

await her, of wedded love and wedded happiness, the unhappy girl felt to her inmost soul that she was an orphan, and desolate, and afflicted. But, even in the first moments of bitter and tender anguish, Julia was taught by her habitual piety to remember that she had a father in heaven, and while she cast all her cares upon him, her mind acquired strength to meet and overcome her trials, and the burst of agony was met contented by the heartfelt and involuntary prayer. But even in the first moments of her tender and bitter agony, the widow of Sir George Villeroy, and the mother-in-law of Julia, remembered, that during the last months of the life of the deceased, the image of Julia's mother—that woman of whom alive and dead she had been incessantly jealous—seemed ever present to Sir George's mind, and that he had repeatedly declared, while gazing tenderly on Julia, that she lived before him again in her. It was, therefore, with vindictive aversion that Lady Villeroy beheld the innocent cause of the

mortification which she had experienced, and while she recollected that Sir George's last look—last kiss—had been Julia's, she drove her from her presence with ungovernable rage; and the terrified girl, when told that Lord Erpingham and Lady Helena were arrived, and desired to see her, flew for refuge to their arms, as if to stay where she was, was dangerous and impossible: but it was impossible for Julia to remain long under the dominion of her feelings, and no sooner had the earl and her sympathizing friend expressed their intention to take her instantly away, than she became calm, and assured them that however ill Lady Villeroy might behave, she was resolved not to insult the memory of her father, by letting it be suspected that his widow had driven her from the house before his unburied remains were removed to their last home.

"But if she insists on your going?"

"She will not do that, depend on it; on the contrary, she has desired me to remain with her some time, and it is only when

she gives way to these paroxysms of jealousy, that she cannot bear me in her sight."

"But why, dear girl, should you be subject to her temper, even for a moment?"

"Because she was my father's wife, and he gave her authority over me by making her his wife; and, therefore, Miss Brightwen always taught me that duty to my father required me to obey her, and bear with her infirmities."

"And as usual, my dear Julia," said the earl, "Miss Brightwen taught you what was right, therefore stay with Lady Villeroy as long as your own excellent head and heart counsel you to do so. Poor woman! I must own I feel for Lady Villeroy."

"I am sure, so do I, my dear Lord," replied Julia, "for it must have been very trying to hear my poor papa say that he loved me, because I was so like my angel-mother."

"No wonder she was jealous, I am

sure I should have been so, should not you Helena?"

"Indeed I should, and were Restormel to tell me he loved me, because he fancied me like his mother, I should certainly dismiss him; still I fear I am not amiable enough to pity your mara—, Lady Villeroy I mean, but I will try to do so if she will let you come to us in a few days, as you can't return with us, and Miss Brightwen will not be allowed to come to you."

"When do you go back to Laurel Grove?"

"To-morrow," said the earl, "but not till the will is opened, as you tell me that my poor friend ordered it to be read directly, and it may contain something which I ought to be made acquainted with immediately, but after that is over, for Helena's sake, I shall make a point of returning, as Lord and Lady Restormel are staying with us, but Helena would not let me come alone."

"How kind—to leave home for my sake at such a moment," cried Julia, burst-

ing into tears; "and how comforting it would be to me to be with such kind friends at this time, but duty commands me to stay, and to bear and forbear."

"A difficult task with some people."

"Yes, but when I reflect how terrible a pang jealousy is, and how great an object of jealousy I have been to poor Lady Villeroy, I do not feel the task so hard an one: —oh, she must hate me, I know she must!" Julia spoke with such excessive earnestness, and with a countenance of such a peculiarly painful expression, that Lady Helena looked at her with alarm and surprise. Could she—could Julia know the pangs of jealousy herself—could she be jealous of Fortescue? But she could not, dared not put this question to her. She ventured, however, to ask her, suddenly, if she had heard from Marcus before he sailed?

"Oh, yes," was her hurried reply, uttered with deep blushes, and an averted face.

"What a trial it was, Julia, for him to

leave you, and for you to be left at such a moment."

"It was, indeed, a trial to both, no doubt."

"No doubt!—you cannot doubt it."

"No, certainly not," Julia gravely, nay even solemnly, replied; and Lady Helena said within herself, then, surely, I was mistaken, and she is not jealous. "Besides," resumed Julia, "he may be gone into danger; oh, I must not think that way!" The conversation now took an interesting and affecting turn, as it relieved the full heart of Julia to converse on what had occurred during the last hours of her beloved father's existence, but they were interrupted by a note from Lady Villeroy, which was as follows:

"Lady Villeroy's compliments to Lord Erpingham and Lady Helena Fortescue; she need not say that her present situation makes it improper for her to receive visitors, who are not near relations, but Lady V. and Miss Villeroy will be glad to see Lord Erpingham and Lady Helena

Fortescue at a more proper and convenient season."

"Excellent!" cried Lady Helena; "fairly turned out, papa."

"I cannot deny it," replied the earl; "still, though not near relations, the friend of her husband; and the father-in-law and sister-in-law, in future, of Miss Villeroy, might, I think, have met with better treatment; however, I shall take the hint, and ring for the carriage."

Poor Julia was too mortified, too overwhelmed to speak; nor did she seem at all cheered when Lady Helena said, that she earnestly hoped and expected that Sir George had left the earl her guardian, and that he would have power to remove her immediately from the hateful thraldom she was then in.

When her noble friends took leave of her, the earl said that he should write a note to Sir George's solicitor, who was also his own, desiring him to let him know the contents of the will, as his own proceedings must depend on them.

They were no sooner gone than Lady Villeroy summoned the weeping Julia to her apartment, to inveigh against the indelicacy and indecorum of the earl and Lady Helena, for having intruded themselves on Julia, and having come to her house at so improper a time; but, no doubt, she said, the earl was impatient to know what was likely to be the amount of the fortune coming to his hair-brained son. To these invictives, Julia was too prudent to reply, and she took the first opportunity of retiring to her own apartment.

The dinner hour passed much to Julia's satisfaction, in gloomy silence on the part of Lady Villeroy, and Julia again retired; but she was not allowed, as she usually was, to refuse drinking tea, and to pass the rest of the evening in her own room. On the contrary, she received an express command to come down and make tea, as Lady Villeroy was too busy to do so herself.

"But for whom am I to make tea?" asked Julia.

The servant could not tell her, and Julia reluctantly obeyed the summons. There were, she saw, three tea-cups on the board, but no guest as yet appeared; however, her curiosity was soon gratified, for a tall, fine looking man entered the drawing-room, and bowing with an air of great respect to Julia, expressed in a most insinuating voice, and with a manner of uncommon gracefulness, his hope that he had not made Miss Villeroy wait tea for him.

"Certainly not, sir," replied Julia, coldly, and repulsively, though pleased in spite of herself with the stranger's appearance; "I did not expect you or any one;" and she wished to add, but dared not, as Lady Villeroy thought it improper to receive my friends, and— I wonder she receives you.

But the stranger as if he guessed what was passing in her mind, said—"It is an awkward thing to be forced to introduce oneself, Miss Villeroy; but as Lady Villeroy is not here to present me in form,

I beg leave to tell you in order to excuse my presumption in appearing before you, that my name is Aubrey, that I am the cousin and nearest relation of Lady Villeroy, and I am just returned from a long residence abroad, in consequence of being summoned by her." Julia only bowed in reply.—Mr. Aubrey's relationship to Lady Villeroy certainly justified that lady for receiving him so soon; but it was no reason for her being obliged to associate with him during the hours of such recent affliction. Therefore, though his countenance and manners were of the most prepossessing nature, Julia left Mr. Aubrey as soon as ever her task of making tea was over—but her doing so exposed her to the severest reproaches from Lady Villeroy, who followed her to her apartment and expressed her resentment of what she called her impertinence in having presumed to treat her nearest relation and herself with such disrespect as to leave him alone when she had desired her to stay and entertain him.

"At a moment like this, madam," replied Julia firmly, though gently, "I should have thought that I might be excused from seeing and entertaining a stranger, even though he was a relation of my own; especially as you did not think it proper to allow my dearest friends to remain with me long."

"You shall see and receive those whom I choose you to receive, and no one else Miss Villeroy, for I know, what you will know to-morrow, that I am your whole and sole guardian."

"You! madam?" exclaimed Julia, turning pale, "you!"

"Yes, I, I, therefore you had better prepare your stubborn heart to obey me as soon as possible, and I will leave you to make due preparation; but remember that you come down to supper." Scarcely could the surprised and agonised Julia controul her feelings till this tyrant in perspective had left her, but then she gave way to a burst of uncontroulable sorrow. Lady Villeroy her guardian! but surely it could not

be—her father's kindness to her and evident estrangement towards Lady Villeroy, were, she flattered herself, a guarantee to the contrary; and she now became as anxious as Lady Villeroy herself for the opening of the will: with a heavy but submissive heart she obeyed the summons to supper—to supper, a meal not usual in that house, and which was, she doubted not, given wholly in compliment to the new guest, and an abiding guest he was to be; for on seeing trunks in the hall she asked whose they were, and was told they were Mr. Aubrey's. At sight of the supper she was still more surprised, for it was abundant and elegant, but as Mr. Aubrey declared he had eaten no dinner, her surprise in a degree vanished. But she was astonished to think how great his power over Lady Villeroy must be, to have conquered her habitual parsimony, so as to have wrung from it such a repast as she now beheld. She was equally astonished to observe the kindness and deference, which Lady Villeroy's manner towards

Mr. Aubrey evinced, though in any other woman, such attention to such a man would not have surprised her, as she could not but own that he was facinating both to the eye and ear, and had the power to excite in any one all feelings but that of confidence. But why he did not inspire this feeling, she would have found it difficult to explain, except it was that his manner was too soft, his tone too insinuating, and as if they were softened, and harmonised more by art than nature. However, he was her mother-in-law's relation and guest, and no more to her; therefore, all that she had to do was to behave to him with civil respect. The next morning was one of anxious expectation to Julia and Lady Villeroy at least, for then the will was to be opened. It was opened and read! and to the disappointment of Lady Villeroy, but the joy of Julia, there was a codicil found by which the latter was put in immediate possession of her fortune, and as she was so soon to be married, was left meanwhile under no guardianship but her own! By

the same codicil Lady Villeroy's expectations of wealth were more than equalled, though her hopes of having still power over Julia were frustrated, as Sir George, conscious, no doubt, that he no longer could bestow his affections on Lady Villeroy, wished to make her amends by giving her what she equally valued. He therefore added a considerable bequest in money to what she possessed under her marriage settlement, and the fee of half of it; still leaving his daughter heiress to a very large, and now unencumbered property. In the codicil he also left legacies to all the members of the family at Laurel Grove, and twenty guineas for a ring to Miss Brightwen.

"Well, then," said Lord Erpingham, when informed of the contents of the will, "you and I, Helena, have nothing to do but return immediately to Laurel Grove, and I trust that as Julia is her own mistress, we shall soon see her there." Lady Villeroy's expectations were similar to his own, and following Julia into her apart-

ment, she exclaimed—" So, Miss Villeroy, I see very clearly that you must have taken pains to misrepresent me to your dear father, or he would never have altered his intentions of leaving you to my care, and I doubt not but you will be off to Laurel Grove as soon as possible."

" You accuse me, madam, unjustly, in both instances," she replied; " I never spoke of you but with respect to my father, and I do not intend to leave you as long as my remaining with you can be to you either comfort or satisfaction."

" Comfort it cannot be—but satisfaction it will; not only because it will look well in the eyes of the world for us to remain together, but also, because as my Cousin Aubrey is going to remain with me to superintend my affairs, it would not be proper for a woman like me, who is as yet young enough to be admired and talked of, to live in the house with a man like Aubrey, without a female companion—so you must stay while he stays, to guard my reputation."

Could Julia have smiled at such a moment, she would have smiled now at hearing this speech; but she could not even reply to it: she, however, in general terms, expressed her readiness to remain with Lady Villeroy, and pleased at the compliance, Lady Villeroy actually imprinted a kiss on her forehead. Poor Julia would fain have followed the remains of her beloved father to the grave: but, as Lady Villeroy did not follow, she was not allowed to do so; and the day of the funeral was one to Julia of unmitigated suffering: some days after that event had taken place, Julia, who wrote constantly to Lady Helena and Miss Brightwen, received the following letter from the former:

"*Laurel Grove.*

"Did I not tell you, dearest girl, that I could never be merry and wise? did we not agree, that it is safer to be in a state of sorrow, than one of happiness? And now, having, like some writers, put my moral first, I shall proceed with my story. Oh! how delightfully did the first days of Lady

Restormel's visit here go off; she, delighting in talking over the hours of her illness and her danger; and when she had drawn from me some account of my attendance on her, how eloquently, how affectingly, and how flatteringly did she express her gratitude and affection! then, when Restormel stole a few hours from his parliamentary duties to come to us, all was enjoyment, and I, as it now appears, was in an unsafe state of blessedness. For, mark the sequel—my evil genius made her appearance at Laurel Grove, in the shape of papa's great niece, and my cousin the Honourable Norah Netherby, that strange, daring, eccentric being, with whom I almost constantly associated while I lived with my grandmother, and who, by means which I never could account for, acquired an irresistible and pernicious ascendency over me! I believe, that in understanding I am her equal, if not superior; and in information and acquirement, she is decidedly inferior to me; still, by dint either of fear or love,

she could always weigh down my better judgment, and carry her point with me: whatever it was, all these scrapes, which have made me so disagreeably talked of, she drew me into, and she was the cause of Lady Restormel's dislike of me. Such are her powers of ridicule and of mimicry, that she could always make me forego my resolution, however wise, and comply with her wishes, however foolish. However, as I am now two years older than when we met last, I had reason to hope that I was grown wiser; therefore, I did not absolutely faint, when I saw her drive up to the door by herself in a post-chaise, a few evenings ago, and knew that Lady Restormel, to whom she is a sort of buga-boo, was our guest! but I felt myself turn pale, and running to meet her in the hall, I exclaimed, I know in no very kind tone, 'Norah, what can bring you hither, and why are you come?' She replied, with a sarcastic look—'If you had said, Norah, why the deuce are you come, and the deuce take you, you would only, I see,

have done justice to the feelings of your heart at seeing me, Nelly. What—neither look, nor tone of welcome! However, no matter, welcome or not, here I must stay, for I have nowhere else to go, and my uncle will not turn me from his door—his poor, friendless, houseless, pennyless niece!' Here she brushed an involuntary tear from her eyes and which went to my heart; clasping my arms round her, I said, 'You are welcome! but, what has happened to you?' 'Pay my chaise first, and dismiss the man, and then I will tell you, for I have not a sous.' I ordered the butler to do so, and took her into the first room near us, and then I learnt her pitiable story, that her father had nearly spent the remnant of his fortune, and was intending to go from France to America, and take her with him, but that he had fallen in love, with a married woman, and had preferred taking her. He had, therefore, left a letter for Norah, with a small sum of money, desiring her to make the best of her way to England, to her uncle at

Laurel Grove: that her desolate state had excited great pity; that she had been invited to travel to England, from Caen, with an Irish family; that she had contrived to quarrel with the wife and daughter before they sailed; that she had, therefore, parted from them at Dover, and had come to us pennyless and unprotected, by coaches as she could, till the last stage, when she took a chaise, knowing we should pay for it: with us, therefore, it was very clear that she must remain; but what would Lady Restormel feel or say? and while I put this question involuntarily to myself, I could not help answering it thus —'and pray what does that signify to us?' is not my father to receive his own niece without consulting her; and is she to tyrannize over our family, because I am to marry her son!' As if Norah read what was passing in my mind, she now observed—combing her black crop with her fingers, adjusting the Belcher handkerchief which was tied round her throat, and with another handkerchief dusting her boots, as a man

would have done, in her usual masculine way—'Nelly, my dear, let me look at your mouth. Is it very sore? for I am told you wear the Restormel bit. Does it sit easily, sweet coz?' 'Nonsense!' replied I; but, consciously blushing, 'Lady Restormel is staying here—and, and I own that her son is my lover.' 'How! what is the empress herself here? Bravo! then I will have fine sport with her! I will pay off old scores with a vengeance!' While I listened with speechless consternation to this threat, papa entered the room, and in an instant, the strange girl, whom he loves for her resemblance to her mother, was hanging about his neck, and with tears, usually strangers to her eyes, was telling him her tale of sorrows. 'Enough,' cried he, 'my poor child! you have an uncle who will be a father to you; and Helena, I trust, will be a sister to the companion of her early youth?' 'Why did papa say this? did he fear that I had imbibed Lady Restormel's prejudice against my cousin?' I suppose he did, and indeed he was not much mistaken, for I had much rather

have seen a ghost than Norah. To me she was now like the Arminian to the poor youth in the tale, and the sight of her boded evil to me. Yet, was I not a free agent; and if I was just to myself, could she make me behave improperly? surely not; and I at length summoned up sufficient courage to go and break Norah's arrival to Lady Restormel. But I want words to describe the effect which the intelligence had on her. She absolutely changed colour, and opened her large eyes to their utmost dimensions, while she exclaimed, 'She here!' then, shrugging up her shoulders, she retired to her own rooms, without deigning to say one word more; and as she shut the door, it was with an angry violence, which grated harshly on my feelings, and roused my pride. When I returned in search of Norah, I found her at her toilet, and before I went to mine, I tried to tell her that I wished she would be as little eccentric and indecorous in her dress as possible, but I dared not; and I consoled myself for my weakness in not doing so, by the idea

that I ought not to feel or act upon such slavish fear of Lady Restormel. I am interrupted, and cannot finish my relation till to-morrow, my dear girl! How we all rejoice with you at the news just received of the safety and complete success of Marcus, in the expedition with which he was entrusted! and also in our expectations of his speedy return! I do not believe that you can stay long with Lady Villeroy. This Aubrey, whom she means, perhaps, should fall in love with her, will fall in love with you, and she will send you off at a moment's notice; therefore, as Miss Brightwen tells you in her letter, we advise you to choose papa for your guardian, then he will be authorized to take you away directly, as it is his will and pleasure you should come hither, *nolens volens*. Think of this! only think of that dear Sophia being gone! but her father wanted her: however, she will return soon: but, when she went, I felt that I had lost my guardian angel, and so it proved.

"Adieu! till to-morrow. H. F."

It was with great thankfulness that Julia felt her fears for Fortescue's life removed by a short but affectionate letter from himself; but her secret cause for uneasiness still remained, and she resolved to choose any guardian rather than Lord Erpingham. However, she was not as yet called upon to make choice of any, and while she mourned over the dangers and trials to which she saw that Lady Helena would now be hourly exposed—trials which might in their result entirely destroy her prospects of happiness, Julia could not help feeling that trials, however severe, which we do not bring upon ourselves by any imprudence of our own, are comparatively easy to endure.

The next day Lady Helena wrote again:

"Now, dear Julia, to resume my tale. Well, we were all assembled round the dinner table, but no Norah appeared, and the groom of the chamber was again sent to cause it to be announced to Miss Netherby that dinner waited for her; when, just as the fish was going to be taken off,

she made her appearance; but, oh, such an appearance! I looked, involuntarily, in terror, at Lady Restormel, when my mother said, 'Lady Restormel, Miss Netherby my lord's niece.' Lady Restormel coldly bowed; but Norah, what do you think she did?—why, she gave her a sort of nod, poking her hair up with her finger at the same time. It was a declaration of war; but luckily one glance at her was enough for the viscountess; she did not see the nod. You never saw Norah, therefore I will describe her: nature has given her such white and delicate feminine limbs, such a pretty little person that art cannot make her form masculine, let her try ever so to do it; but her manners and her hair, are those of a man, not a woman. Her eyes are black; her nose large and Roman; her mouth wide, but her lips are of that high scarlet which is often seen when the complexion is as her's is, of a sallow and colourless hue, and her teeth are fine. This day, however, as if to make her appearance as fierce as possible, she had put

on a profusion of high rouge, and her person, that is her back and shoulders, and her bosom were nearly without covering, while her petticoats displayed the whole of her fine feet and ankles; in short, she looked like an opera figurante who had forgotten her head-dress. I declare, Julia, I could not look at her; but not so, a silly young man, a sort of rich *parvenu,* a Mr. Benson, whom papa is bringing as much as he can into good society, to keep him out of bad. This youth, knowing she is the Hon. Miss Netherby, and papa's niece, was disposed to admire her before she appeared, and the first inviting glance of her dark eye, an eye that always seems seeking whom it may devour, fixed him her's, and he had a grin for all her observations, a loud laugh for all her jokes, and I saw that, if she pleased, the youth's thousands a-year would soon be her's. This *petit succès,* of which she was very conscious, emboldened her to engross the conversation, and made her complaisant enough to wear the shawl, which papa desired me to lend her,

lest she should catch cold, a hint which she was too politic not to take; and papa fancying that her style of dress was French, not her own, and pleased at her obedience, gave himself up to the charm her vivacity always has for him, and really forgot that she talked more than any young woman ought in the presence of her elders;—while Lady Restormel sat in proud if not sullen silence. Then her eating! she began by detaining the fish till she had filled her plate with that, and when the second course was going to be removed, she was eating still and alone; but for this she had the grace to apologize, by declaring that she had not eaten one good meal for days, as she had not money to buy one: while she said this, she had evidently tears in her eyes, and Lady Restormel saw it, in whose ear mamma was at that moment telling the story of Lord Netherby's shameful and cruel conduct. I instantly saw the change the tale and the tears produced in that noble being's feelings, that is, I saw pity struggle with, and, for a moment, overcome

disgust and aversion ; and with a look and tone which ought to have gone to Norah's heart, had not that heart been of stone, she courteously said, ' Do not hurry yourself, Miss Netherby, I have not done yet ; I am going to eat one of those puddings.' In reply, the strange unfeeling girl only said, ' Oh ! I never hurry myself ; I always take my time.' Then, soon after, she said, ' Lady Restormel, shall I have the honour to take wine with you!' and it was in so mannish and brassy a manner, that I saw my father was disgusted ; not so Benson, for he laughed with delight, and I was in terror lest he should clap her on the back and call her a funny fellow, if not, a jolly dog. Lady Restormel's aversion now returned in its full force ; and, not deigning to notice this masculine proposal, she entered into conversation with the gentleman next her. ' If you want wine, Norah, I will drink with you,' said papa, gravely ; ' it is not the custom, in this country, for ladies to challenge ladies to drink :'—but enough of this odious dinner. The next

day, as I expected, Lady Restormel said she had altered her mind, and would go and spend three or four days at the house of a friend in the neighbourhood, and return to us against her son came. In the meanwhile she studiously avoided being alone with me, because, no doubt, she dared not speak of Norah lest she should be betrayed into the utterance of something severe; her manner was, however, very kind; and when we parted, her kiss was more than usually affectionate; but she could not help saying, in a low voice, 'take care!' and as this was overheard by Norah, it did not escape a comment from her. 'How much that kiss and manner conveyed, Nelly! poor, unhappy child! it seemed to say, be of good cheer! at present I love you, and will continue to patronise you, and you shall have the great joy of being my daughter-in-law and slave; but, beware! and behave prettily, or it is all over with you!' then, with an oath, yes, Julia! with an oath, she added, that the finest and best husband in the world is

not worth the sacrifices of will and independence, which Lady and Lord Restormel would, she saw, exact and expect from the wretched slavé who entered their family. This conversation did me no good, and there was no Sophia near to counteract it! By-the-by, I ought to have told you that Aston left us the day Sophia did, therefore, there was no one to keep this imp in order. I must also tell you, that papa seeing Sophia's evident uncomfortableness and wish to leave us, began to search about for a cause, and having found one, he desired to see her alone. Sophia returned from the conference with tears in her eyes, and a deep flush on her cheek—but so handsome, and, I suspect, so happy! for she had taken it into her head that papa would disapprove Aston's attachment to her, and that, therefore, for his sake and her own, she ought to go away; he, suspecting this, thought it right to tell her that when decency allowed Aston to propose to her, it would, he assured her, be with his and Lady Erpingham's

entire approbation. I suspect that he said the same to Aston. Sophia will return to us in a few days, and oh! that you would but meet her here, for she almost pines after you, and surely no one has such claims on you as she has (my brother Marcus excepted). Again interrupted, I must close this, and write again to-morrow.

"H. F."

## CHAP. XVIII.

LADY HELENA did write again as follows:—

"I hope to get through my disagreeable recital to-day Julia—and then I wish you to say something soothing in reply if you can; well, insensibly, Norah resumed her ascendancy over me, but though she resumed her usual sports, and went coursing with the gentlemen, and rabbit hunting, I did not accompany her on these occasions, not from a regard to decorum, but simply from humanity and a dislike to witness the cruel sport of depriving animals of life; but I resumed with her one old amusement of jumping over hedges and ditches with a pole, and also riding pony races with her in the park. And why not? unless convinced that such things were improper; I could only forbear from a servile fear of Lady Restormel, therefore, I

had my own approbation of what I did. But one morning, alas! after an early breakfast, as we were walking in part of the park, called the paddock, and where there was a leaping-bar, Norah challenged me to jump over it as we used to do in earlier days, and as I thought no one would see us, I consented, a love of jumping being, you know, one of my besetting sins; and I forgot the Reverend John Sumner, and my assurance to him:—accordingly we jumped over this bar, heightening it as our power grew stronger, till at last we both could clear it by a running leap—'Aye,' said Norah; 'but the difficulty is to do it by a standing leap—you cannot do that Nelly, but I can;' accordingly she prepared to do so, made the attempt and failed, and in her fall she certainly did not fall as decently as Cæsar at the foot of Pompey's statue. Her failure, and consequent personal exposure, ought, I own, to have deterred me; but emulation was stronger in me than a sense of propriety, and summoning all my force and agi-

lity, I leaped over the bar, and without touching it! at this moment I heard a shout from many voices as if of joy and congratulation, and looking up I saw for the first time that the roof of a barn near us, which some men were thatching, was covered with men watching the notable feats and exertions of two right honorable young ladies! and as the lookers on were, I concluded, some of my father's tenants, and men, they shouted from joy to see their young lady succeed where a stranger failed! Norah looked mortified, and I fear I looked triumphant, though shocked and ashamed of having been observed, even though victorious, and I vowed I would jump no more as we were overlooked; but my triumph was of short duration for scarcely had the shout ceased when standing up in her barouche, which stopped to let a cart pass at the entrance of the lower park gate, I beheld Lady Restormel! and she had witnessed the jump, and heard the shout. No doubt her look and mine were a scene for those who could en-

joy them, and Norah laughed aloud—while I, mortified and wounded to the quick, ran off full speed to the house, and never stopped till I reached my own room, and there I threw myself on the bed in an agony of tears. Lady Restormel's friends were forced to leave home that morning early, therefore she had returned some hours sooner than she had expected to set off, and she arrived just time enough to see not only vaulting by the Lady Helena Fortescue, but to witness the noisy sympathy of *le tiers etat* with my success; yes, she must suppose that my performance was consciously made in their presence. Horrible degradation! yet one from which the swelling pride of my heart forbade me to clear myself! let the consequences be what they might. I had not been long in this state of contending and feelings, when my mother tapped at my door, and said, 'Helena, do you know that Lady Restormel is arrived?' I replied in so faint and sorrowful a tone, that my mother instantly entered the room, and I relieved my own

full heart, but tortured her's, by throwing myself on her neck, and giving way to a paroxysm of tumultuous feeling. But seeing her alarm I controlled my emotions, and, soon as I could, told her the cause of them. 'And is this all, my love!' cried she, 'heaven be praised! and is this agony occasioned only by fear of Lady Restormel's disapprobation?' Here her voice faltered, and throwing herself on the bed she wept for some moments in silence, while I, attributing her tears to the terror mine had excited in her, reprobated very loudly my own want of self-command, as it had so painfully affected her; but gently drying her tears, she replied, 'No, no, it is not that which thus affects me, it is to feel how alive you are to the fear of displeasing Lady Restormel, and of offending her ideas of propriety, and that my disapprobation seems a matter of perfect indifference to you! My dear child! is Lady Restormel alone a judge of what is right, and is the disapproval of your father and myself a matter of indifference to you?' I was

thunderstruck! but, I could with perfect truth sooth and pacify her, by assuring her that it was not a true, but an exaggerated view of my offending, which I expected and feared from Lady Restormel; and that if she were as candid as my beloved mother, I should not fear her. This assurance healed her tender, maternal jealousy, and she left me to go and exculpate me from the worst part of the business, that of jumping before witnesses. This she insisted on being allowed to do—and I could not disobey; besides, in my heart I was not sorry, spite of my pride, to be so exculpated; she soon returned to conduct me to my dreaded judge. I saw by her eye that Lady Restormel had been shedding many tears, and I instantly concluded that she had wept over my weakness and fears of its results; and when she opened her arms to me, which she did as soon as she saw me, my tears of regret and compunction redoubled, and I was going to express my sorrow for my indiscretion when she stopped me, saying—'Enough!

I had rather not talk on the subject, you were, I find, unconscious you were overlooked, and the pastime itself, however absurd, is comparatively a trifle, and not worth animadversion: besides, you were tempted by your companion, you would not have jumped alone, Helena!' *Ne gagez pas!* cried I, smiling through my tears, and then I honestly told her of my feats in Norfolk, and of my promise then to do so no more. 'Really, my dear friend,' said the countess to my mother, 'our Helena is incorrigible, and a jump is to her the Cleopatra, for which, like Marc Antony, she would lose the world, and be content to lose it.' Yes, the world, but not your good opinion, said I. 'Well said, Hyperbole!' she replied, 'thou art a flatterer, Helena!' 'No, she is the most honest of human beings,' cried my mother eagerly, for she need not have told us this last tale of herself.' 'Certainly not, and being so ingenuous can never go very far from the path of rectitude.' We then talked of other things, but before I left

her, she said, 'Helena! would it not be better to say nothing of this silly business to Restormel when he comes?' No, indeed! replied I, I will have no concealments from him; he shall not be deceived, but see me with all my faults, to love or to leave as he chooses! 'I thought you would so reply,' she exclaimed, 'and you have not disappointed me.' We expect Restormel to-morrow, and I own to you I dread seeing a frown on his face. If he presumes to reprove me, and says he will not have a jumping wife! why then—but farewell my dearest Julia! you shall hear how he behaves. H. F.

The following was the postscript to the above letter:—

"Restormel came this evening unexpectedly, and no sooner were we alone than I told him with a faltering voice that I had a painful confession to make to him. 'Not that you find you do not love me, any thing but that I can bear,' was his reply. Indeed, cried I; then courage! and I told my tale, eagerly

watching his countenance as I did so, but he very soon turned his head away; however, I went on, and when I came to the shouting, and his mother's appearance, he interrupted me by giving way to a most immoderate burst of laughter, and it was some minutes before he could speak. 'Excellent,' cried he, at length—'oh! that I had been there, methinks I see my mother's looks and thine Helena! well, my sweet vaulter! all I wish is, that when next you vault, I may be there to see!' Dear! dear Restormel! never did I love him before as I did at that moment! Not one rebuke! one frown! he only said, when I expressed my regret for my folly—'I own I should not like to have my wife amuse herself in this way; but, really, considering the force of example, and the animal spirits of eighteen, I can readily excuse.' Excuse! cried I, not quite liking the word—'I mean,' resumed he, blushing, 'that I think it was natural for you to jump; and the being overlooked, unconsciously by you at least, was no fault of

your's! But my mother! methinks I see my mother! and would it were not then as now in "my mind's eye," Helena!' I can write no more, the post is going out. Oh! I am so pleased! so happy now!"

Lady Helena joined Lady Restormel in her own apartment soon after she sealed her letter, and in the same happy humour in which she wrote it. Lord Restormel had just left her apartment, and Lady Helena was not only eager to impart to the latter what her lover had said, but also to learn what had passed between him and his mother. Lady Helena expressed herself in most animated terms respecting Lord Restormel's kindness in judging what she called her offence; but Lady Restormel interrupted her by saying, "My dear Helena, how could Restormel do or feel otherwise? as he very properly said to me—'Lady Helena blamed herself so severely, and seemed so conscious of her faults, that I could not have the heart to reprove her, or make one displeasing observation. Had she set my opinion at defiance, and

defended what she had done, making light of such a circumstance, and seeming resolved to act in opposition both to decorum and my sense of propriety, then I certainly should have felt and spoken differently.'"

"And Lord Restormel said this!" said Lady Helena turning pale.

"He did, and I thought he spoke wisely—do not you think so?"

Very wisely, was her reply; and soon after she left the room. So then, thought she, it was to my submissive contrite spirit I owed his forbearance. Had I presumed to defend myself, and have a will of my own, he would have reproved me! he my lover! alas! what then will the husband do when I am in his power! and I had the folly to be so pleased with his manner of receiving my communications. At this unfortunate moment Lady Helena encountered Norah Netherby. This young lady was not only one of those persons who love fun and mischief for their own sakes, but, like Mansfeldt, she never forgave little affronts and

mortifications, and was always on the watch to revenge them in some way or other; not that she was generally envious, she was only so on particular points—for instance, she did not envy Lady Helena her excelling beauty, her tall and graceful person, and her various acquirements; with these she came into no competition, and was moreover sure from experience, that her little person, *piquante physiognomie* and amusing talents enabled her often to attract as much as her more highly-gifted cousin; but she valued herself upon her personal feats, and her excessive agility, and to be excelled by Lady Helena was an insupportable mortification, and not to be forgiven! while the shouts which overwhelmed Lady Helena with surprise and confusion, but which she, aware that they were beheld, had anticipated for herself, filled her with envy and bitter regret, and she longed to inflict some mortification on her cousin in return for what she had herself experienced. To Lady Restormel she had vowed unceasing dis-

like, for that lady's representations and arguments had, she knew, prevented a gentleman whose attentions she valued from making her his wife, as Lady Restormel knew that Norah Netherby was very ill-calculated to make a good mother to the infants a first wife had left him. Nor did she feel more good-will towards Lord Restormel himself, as he had been once so amused with her powers of mimickry and art *de raconter*, that he had staid a whole day longer at the house where he met her to enjoy her society, she had flattered herself that she had made such an impression on him as would not soon be effaced ; but the woman whose chief recommendation, and whose prominent power is that of amusing, rarely interests, especially a man in the prime of youth ; and when Lord Restormel ceased to see the arch playfulness of Miss Netherby's countenance, and to hear the queer croaking, but laughter-moving tone of her voice, he ceased to remember her, till he heard some new instance of her eccentricity, and that

of her more highly-gifted cousin, from his apprehensive mother; but Lord Restormel had excited hopes in Norah Netherby, which he had not fulfilled, and her vanity, though not her heart resented it; she was eager now, therefore, to take advantage of every opportunity to wound Lady Helena and Lord and Lady Restormel, where she knew them to be most vulnerable.

"Well, sweet Nelly! what ails thee," said she to Lady Helena, "there seems a cloud on thy brow? has thy lordly lover been scolding thee, poor little dear, and called thee jumping Joan?"

"No, indeed," replied Lady Helena unguardedly, "he saw no occasion to reprove me, as I was so self-condemned."

"And he presumed to say this to you? poor, humbled Nelly!"

"No, indeed, he did not say so to me—only to his mother."

"And that was presumptuous enough! If a lover dared so to have spoken of me! I would have made him repent his presumption: no wonder thy brow is over-

clouded, and this in all the first pride of thy youth and beauty Nelly! To use an elegant expression, thou hast brought thy hogs to a fine market coz!" These observations came only too home to the heart of Lady Helena, as her own pride had suggested to it the same feelings; but she was too wary to own this painful truth, and, in order to avoid a direct reply, she inveighed against the excessive vulgarity of expression and allusion in which Norah indulged herself, and before the dangerous subject could be renewed their conference was interrupted; but, its theme was not forgotten.—The next morning Miss Netherby went out with the gentlemen of the hunt in the neighbourhood, and by those staying in the house, having vainly endeavoured to persuade Lady Helena to accompany her. Her absence from the breakfast table certainly encreased Lady Helena's comfort, as, spite of herself, she did not feel at ease in Norah's presence, now that her lover and Lady Restormel were part of the family circle. A walk before break-

fast with Lord Restormel, and a morning spent with him and Lady Restormel in the latter's dressing-room, had removed all unpleasant feelings, at least for a while, from the mind of Lady Helena—a mind so happily constituted that it had a power of turning away from its disquiets, spite of its power to create disquiet, for itself. But Lady Helena saw that both her lover and his mother felt towards her confidence as well as love, and they inspired in her what they themselves experienced. At dinner she had to encounter Norah Netherby, but, however, Miss Brightwen was now returned again, and Lady Helena felt, therefore, as if her good genius were come to counteract her evil one. At table Miss Brightwen was seated opposite Miss Netherby, but after the first introduction had taken place, Norah was too much taken up in mustering the mischievious jokes which she meditated, to observe Sophia.

"So, Nelly," she begun, "you would not hunt with us to day, we had fine sport!

I was in at the death! I wish you had been there, it would have reminded you of former times, and the days of ancient granny's."

"Reminded me of former times!"

"Yes, to be sure, when you were a Nimrod!" Here Lady Restormel and her son exchanged looks.

"When was I a Nimrod?" cried Lady Helena, indignantly, "when did I ever hunt, Miss Netherby?"

"When? oh fie Nelly! to ask that question, but I see you wish me to be mum now, with a significant nod of her head, and a significant look at Lord and Lady Restormel, and I do not wish to tell tales."

"There are no tales to tell, Miss Netherby," replied Lady Helena, "I never hunted in my life!"

"She says true, I am sure my daughter never hunted," said Lord Erpingham, "nor should my niece if I had any power over her."

"How! do you say so too, Uncle Erp!

this I did not expect, and pray how can you assert this? you did not live with us at granny's?"

"No, but notwithstanding, I trust that Helena did not do there what I should have disapproved her doing here."

"Oh! you trust she did not, but if Helena took care you should not know it, you could not disapprove, you know; could you forbid, if she did not ask your leave?"

"What, I suppose Nelly never went shooting either?"

"Never, never!" exclaimed Lady Helena; "you could, you never could prevail on me to accompany you. I always hated all field-sports for women, as cruel and unbecoming."

"Always," she replied, with a meaning emphasis, and a sarcastic sneer, "always!" During these questions and replies, various changes of colour and emotions her quick eye had discovered on Lord Restormel's expressive face, and in the speaking countenance of his mother; and she was stimulated to go on, but, at this

moment, she felt that an eye as observant and penetrating as her own, was upon her, and spite of herself, she shrunk from the searching, severe, yet calm and quiet fixed look of Sophia Brightwen. However, she persevered, and said, " what, then, Nelly, you mean to deny do you,"

" Deny ! I mean to deny, as if I could deny a truth, however degrading to myself ?"

" You are angry Nelly ; no proof that of innocence, but let me go on. What ! do you not remember going out once, in January, and walking up to your knees in long grass ; but, to the surprise of all, bagging more than any of us, till they called you in the field, Helena Hitall, and declared, that if you took equally good aim at men with your eye, it would be dangerous to be in your company."

" Miss Netherby," cried Lord Erpingham, indignantly, " I insist upon your ceasing thus to calumniate your cousin."

" Nay, my dear lord !" said the countess, " Norah is only joking."

"Not I, indeed, Lady Erpingham. I mean what I say; I always am true, whatever else I am. I never hide my faults, present or past; and the man who marries me will, at least, know what he marries!"

"Admirable!" muttered young Benson, who seemed to hang enamoured on her looks and words.

Lady Helena was now too shocked, too much overpowered by this mischievous insinuation, that she was telling falsehoods, for fear of displeasing those whom it was her wish to conciliate, that she could no longer defend herself; and her father, also, was at first confounded by this implied charge, especially as he saw the effect it had on his noble guests; but, before he could recollect himself sufficiently to speak, the attention of every one was arrested by a sweet-toned, but rather loud laugh, from the usually silent and unobtrusive Miss Brightwen, who, while she laughed, fixed her eyes on Norah, with a meaning so satirical and contemptuous,

that the bold, brassy girl, was at once nettled, and awed by it.

"Are you laughing at me, madam!" said she, in a faltering voice.

"To be sure, I am!" was the reply, "or rather at your ludicrous description of my friend's astonishing feats in the field. I only wonder you did not say she was called Nelly Knock'em-down, Helena Hit-all is too elegant, and the other would have been more in your style; and I am sure the one would have been as true, and as like Lady Helena, as the other."

"Do yo mean to say that I lie, madam?"

"Why, lie is a vulgar word; I mean to say, that you are now romancing; your motives for so doing are best known to yourself; you may do so merely to entertain the company, but if you mean to be believed, you should not have gone to such improbable lengths in your assertions."

"Improbable! I appeal to you, Benson; have not you heard Nelly called

Helena Hit-all, on account of her killing such numbers in a *battu* once ?"

"Certainly, certainly; it was a notorious fact."

"There! you may doubt my word, but can you doubt his ?"

"Equally," replied Sophia, indignantly, and with a look of contempt. "There is not the word of any being living I would take in preference to that of Lady Helena Fortescue, who, so far from ever seeking to hide her errors, is only too apt to publish them unnecessarily; and I believe that there are those present who can corroborate the truth of what I say."

"There are, indeed!" said Lady Restormel, eagerly; "and such is the good effect of habits of ingenuousness, that suspicion of the contrary habit can never long attach to such a character, however ingeniously it has been fastened on it. Therefore, Miss Netherby, spite of your assertion, and that of your bribed witness, bribed, I see, by your smiles and your glances, I believe Lady Helena never either hunted

or shot; not only because she is neither cruel, nor unfeminine in her habits, but, simply because she positively asserts that she never did either."

"Oh! but I own I have shot at a mark," cried Lady Helena, struggling with the tears which the kind interference of Sophia had forced from her eyes.

"There!" cried Sophia, triumphantly, "now that confession is so like Lady Helena; and you, Baroness Munchausen, must withdraw your charge."

"It cannot be admitted; Miss Brightwen, dear respected friend! I thank you," said the Earl, "and you too Lady Restormel. Helena's cause was, I saw, in such good hands, that I did not think it necessary to interfere before; but now, I wish to ask Mr. Benson, why he asserted what he did, and made what he must know was a false assertion."

"Oh! my lord, because I did not like to spoil a good story. I thought Miss Netherby was only joking."

"I am satisfied; but what says Miss Netherby herself?"

" The contrary of the proverb; she says, Lord Erp, namely, not 'give a dog an ill name, and hang him'—but 'give a dog a good name, and save him.' I leave you to make the application."

" You are still joking, I presume, Norah," replied the Earl sternly, seizing her arm and grasping it violently as he spoke.

Norah was now alarmed, and readily exclaimed, " Oh dear, yes, to be sure! but your gripe is no joke."

He then released her, and dropping him a curtsy, she ran out of the room. Not long after Mr. Benson made an excuse for leaving it also. As there were no other company at dinner that day than Benson, Lord Erpingham was at liberty to speak as he felt concerning his eccentric niece, and he could not help saying, " that he was sometimes forced to remember her houseless, fatherless condition, to prevent his commanding her from his presence and his house."

" But, my dear lord, remember," said

the countess, "that poor Norah assured you, in what she asserted to-day, she was only in joke; did she not, Lady Restormel?"

"Miss Netherby has the honour of being Lord Erpingham's niece," replied that lady, her fine face suffused with crimson, "therefore, I beg leave to decline making a single observation on her conduct."

"I am glad, my lord!" said Lord Restormel, with eyes sparkling with indignation, "that you asked an explanation of that grinning puppy; if not I should, and not, perhaps, as mildly as you did. If he does not take care, Miss Netherby may get him into some difficulties which he will not be able to get safely out of."

"I believe, Restormel, she will get him into the worst of all difficulties for a man to get out; for, I suspect, she will get him into the matrimonial difficulty, and I can have no objection if she has not."

The ladies now left the table; and as Lady Restormel took Sophia's arm, the

latter said, in a low voice, " That young lady is a very dangerous person, does not your ladyship think so ?"

" Oh, most dangerous! and I cannot help remembering the saying, ' One cannot touch pitch without being defiled', when I consider how much Lady Helena has lived with her."

" No wonder; but you should also recollect, dear madam, that no stain adheres long to a pure and fine skin; and the defilement, if there were any in this case, must have been removed from our dear friend, as soon as she ceased to associate with Miss Netherby."

" I wish for all our sakes, to believe you right; but, believe me, that I saw with pain how much Restormel writhed under the conversation at table : and, I know him so well, that I am sure he will now, that all obstacles to his attachment are removed, and that he considers this dear girl as his own, be far more tenacious than I could be on points that compromise in any way her dignity or conduct : jealous, also, he will be

of any influence over her, which can infringe on her exclusive regard for his opinions and even prejudices. She must, if she values and wishes to retain his love, be wary and circumspect."

"She is too ingenious to be the first,' said Sophia, 'and too rash to be the second, I doubt, in any great degree; and I shall never feel her happiness safe while this dangerous girl remains here."

Norah, meanwhile, was ruminating in the park on what had passed, and having convinced herself that she had gone too far, and had also failed of her object, that of infusing suspicions of Lady Helena's integrity, as well as of her violation of what discreet persons call propriety, into the minds of Lord and Lady Restormel, she resolved to try and convince Lady Helena and her uncle and aunt that she was so obviously joking all the time she was speaking, that she was quite surprised at the gravity with which she was heard, and the angry violence with which she was contradicted; for she saw by her uncle's

manner, that on some subjects he was not disposed to bear raillery, and that he might send her away even before the conquest she was meditating was secured. Accordingly, after she had kept her appointment with Benson, and walked round the flower-garden with him, she sought her justly-offended cousin, and had no difficulty in appeasing her wrath, or making her believe she was only in sport, and was led on to shew the utmost of her talents as an actress, by the unexpected conviction which flashed in her mind, that her fiction appeared reality. Lady Helena's generous nature always made her hate to think ill of any one, more especially of the companion of her childhood, she therefore readily forgave and believed her, and induced Lady Restormel to do the same, but not Miss Brightwen, as she came to an examination of Norah Netherby's looks, conduct, and manner, with an unprejudiced as well as clear observation; she had not to distrust the probable justice of her own convictions as the others had, but was

justified in thinking her convictions true and unbiassed; she therefore still believed that what she said was uttered with a malicious intention, and prompted by bad motives, and she resolved never to let her vigilance in watching this dangerous girl, cease for a moment; but she was not suffered to remain long where she was; her father, ever restless, and ever in search of novelty to interest and occupy his mind, came unexpectedly to take her with him into Gloucestershire, to look at an estate which he wished to purchase there, and she felt it her duty to accompany him.

"Nelly," said Norah to her cousin when Sophia went away, "though I am glad she is gone, for her eye acts as a fetter on me, I cannot hate Miss Brightwen as I hate the Empress of Green Hills, and shall I tell you why?"

"Yes."

"Why the reason is, I believe, because I see that she is above being governed in her opinions of persons by what this person says and the other person asserts. She

judges for herself, and I see those searching eyes are bent only on discovering truth; and if while looking at and listening to me, she could find aught to commend, I should have the full benefit of the discovery, and she would defend me and give me my due, even in despite of her imperial majesty, aye, and her stern son too; am I not right?"

"Yes; and I never heard you utter any thing wiser in my life; but why do you hate Lady Restormel; she does not look at you so stedfastly and severely as Sophia does?"

"No, she scarcely deigns to look at me at all; besides, if she did, I know she would not look to see what was really in me, but what she fancies in me; her mind and her heart are steeled against me, and nothing would ever induce her to open them to me; but come, let us go into the billiard-room, you promised to play with me when the Brightwens' were gone."

It so happened that the billiard-room

joined the library, whither Lady Restormel had gone to search for a book, and, as the library fire was out, she had seated herself by that in the billiard-room, and was earnestly engaged in reading when Lady Helena and Norah entered; they could not see her, as a large folding-screen stood between her and the table; but she was just going to announce her presence, when she was kept back and confounded by hearing Norah exclaim, "I tell you, I do hate the empress of Green Hills, and always will hate her;" and before Lady Helena could reply, Norah gave a striking representation of Lady Restormel's mode of talking, voce, manner, and action; as a piece of mimickry it was perfect, but the honourable mind of Lady Helena forbade her to enjoy it; on the contrary, having vainly tried to stop her from proceeding, she resolutely held her ears, and when her mischievous companion had ceased, she told her, if she ever again presumed to ridicule and mimic in her presence, a being whom she so loved and

venerated, she would never rest till she had prevailed on her father to send her from the house, as one incapable of regarding the common claims and decencies of social life.

"But hear me, Nelly," cried the unabashed offender, "is it not like her?"

"Not the least, not at all; a faun might as well try to look like the Apollo, as you like her; not one look, one word like—let me pass—I will leave you!"

"No—there, I have locked the door and put the key in my pocket!

"Give it me directly, or——"

"No; you shall hear some more; now hear how she reads Milton."

"I will not;—come, Norah, give me the key, or you know I am stronger than you, and I can take it by force."

But Norah resisted, and began to mimic Lady Restormel again, when that lady thought it high time to come forward; but, wishing to seem unconcerned, she chose to give her appearance an air of pleasantry; she, therefore, mounted a footstool, and

looking over the top of the screen, she exclaimed—

"Well done, Miss Netherby! it is a pity such talents as your's should be confined to private life; what think you of rivalling Mathews, and having a *public at home* of your own!"

Even Norah was abashed at this unexpected apparition, while Lady Helena was pale and trembling with consternation; but, recovering herself a little, the dauntless girl pretended to struggle with ungovernable laughter, and unlocking the door, was going to leave the room, as if on purpose to hide it, when Lady Restormel seized her arm and desired her to stop, for she wished to thank her for the obligation she had conferred on her.

"I am sure you are quite welcome," replied Norah, trying to look bold, while Lady Helena faltered out—

"Obligations! did you say?"

"Yes, dearest Helena, obligations; for, but for her degrading exhibition of me, I should not have had the heartfelt joy of

hearing myself defended by you, and knowing how dear I am to you; is not this an obligation?—I, therefore, humbly thank you, Miss Netherby, and believe me one too who has not gone through the world with closed eyes, that there is not a man or woman whose good opinion is worth having, that would not cheerfully consent to be ridiculed, and even mimicked by Norah Netherby if they were sure of being defended, loved, and respected by Helena Fortescue! You may go now, madam, she added, in her proudest manner."

"I do go, madam," she replied, imitating the tone exactly.

"Excellent ape!" said Lady Restormel as she did so. "Come come! be just Nelly! the likeness is perfect!" And Lady Restormel mimicked Norah as well; but added, "this was beneath me—was it not Helena?"

"I think it was," she replied, "yet not so when I consider that you thus mortified Norah by shewing her that you have as great a power of mimickry as herself, but

that you are above using the talent, on which she values herself."

Norah was mortified; she felt the power of Lady Restormel was equal to her own, and in spite of all her assured bravery, she was conscious that she retired wounded from the field—while Lady Helena was more endeared to the heart of Lady Restormel, and their happiness in each other increased; dear, indeed, to the heart of Lady Helena were the moments that succeeded, and when Lord Restormel left Laurel Grove the next morning, the renewed assurance which he felt of his mother's confiding tenderness towards the woman of his love, filled his whole soul with happiness and thankfulness. Norah again saw that she had lost ground with her cousin, which it was for her interest to keep, she therefore humbled herself before her, intreated pardon of her for the liberty she had taken with her and Lady Restormel, and was again forgiven; but unfortunately Lady Helena's generous feelings were apt to run away with her, and having

cordially forgiven Norah all her offences, she could not rest till she had proved her forgiveness beyond doubt, by an entire renewal of her wonted familiarity; and Norah was never so sure of carrying a point with her rash, but noble minded cousin, as after a recent reconciliation; a few days after this last disagreement, a review of the regiment in which Mr. Benson was a cornet, was to take place in the neighbourhood, and as the colonel was to give a breakfast after it, to which the family at Laurel Grove as well as others in the neighbourhood were invited, it was decided that they should attend the review. But, before the day arrived, Lord Erpingham was summoned to London by Lord Aston on business, and took one carriage away with him, and the riding horses were either lame or in medicine when the morning of the review came. Suffice, to avoid unnecessary details, that Lady Erpingham, from these and other circumstances, saw herself obliged to give up her kind intention of taking three young ladies to the

review and the breakfast, who were, she knew, invited, but had been forced to decline going, because they had no conveyance thither—and they had been brought up and accustomed to every luxury in life, but had suddenly been forced to relinquish all by the ruin of their father and his subsequent death. All the neighbourhood pitied them, and some beheld them with respect, others saw with contrary feelings the endeavours they made to conceal their poverty and to hold their heads as proudly as before; but Lady Erpingham and Lady Helena did more, they on every possible occasion offered them the use of their carriage, and in a manner as if they felt themselves obliged by their acceptance of it: greatly, therefore, did Lady Erpingham regret that she could at most offer only one seat in her carriage to the Miss Nanbys, when her difficulty was completely, though disagreeably removed. Norah had been for two days trying to prevail on Lady Helena to accompany her to the review on an ass, as they had

no riding horses, and as they had lately procured capital asses, on which they had amused themselves with riding races. It so happened that Norah had just declared her resolution to go herself on ass-back, and had even with tears lamented that her cousin now would never do any thing to oblige her, when Lady Erpingham entered the room, loudly lamenting her inability to take the Miss Nanbys to the review and breakfast, even though Lady Restormel was willing to give up her seat, and stay at home. Lady Helena joined in her lamentation; and no sooner was she gone again, than she told Norah she repented her refusal, and would accompany her to the field in the manner she wished; accordingly she told the countess that evening, when she retired for the night, that she and Norah had provided their own mode of conveyance, and that she had written a note to the Miss Nanbys to say that the barouche should call for them the next morning.

"But what conveyance have you procured Helena?" said her mother.

"Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest Ma, till you applaud the deed!" was the evasive reply, and no other would Lady Helena give. They were to be on the review ground by ten, but before Lady Restormel, who had had a bad night, had left her apartment, Lady Helena and Norah were mounted on their asses, which Norah had, out of compliment to Benson, ornamented with ribbands and saddle cloths of blue and red, the colour of his regimentals. Indeed he himself had been at the expense of these decorations. This folly was committed unknown to Lady Helena, but she did not think it necessary to desire the colours to be removed: she also thought that it would be more decorous for her also to appear on an ass, decorated with Benson's colours, than for Norah so to appear alone. Lady Erpingham saw them set off, but, though she did not approve, she had not the heart to object,

yet she was so sure that Lady Restormel would be displeased at such an eccentric excursion, that it was a long time before she ventured to name it to her.

"This comes of association with that bold girl," cried Lady Restormel angrily and hastily. Lady Helena would never have thought of doing such a thing herself—to make themselves the gaping stock of the vulgar crowd!"

"Well, well, dear friend, I hope the crowd will be too much engaged in looking at other things to notice them—and really I do not think poor Norah a bold girl." The carriages came round, and Sophia, who was just returned, went with Lady Restormel and one of the Miss Nanbys in her's, and the two others with Lady Erpingham.

"There is one comfort however," whispered Lady Restormel to Sophia, "Lord Erpingham and Lord Aston intend to meet us at the review, and then the asses will be sent home no doubt." When they reached the ground, as the weather was

still cold, Lady Restormel chose to remain in her carriage, while her young companions mounted the barouche seat. Lady Erpingham, with her friends, were conducted by a nobleman whom they knew to the side of the reviewing general.

"But where are your young lady and my niece," asked the former, of her servants?

"They are there, amongst that line of horsemen, on their asses, my lady."

"I see them now, but go and desire them to dismount and join me or Lady Restormel." The message was delivered, but not obeyed. Lady Helena herself would have dismounted immediately, but Norah would not hear of it; and I must own that as my heroine is by no means a perfect being, she was influenced to this disobedience, not only by Norah's persuasions, but her own weakness. Benson's own servant attended Norah and Lady Helena, as well as Lord Erpingham's, and this man had contrived on the road, to compliment Lady Helena, without offending her, on her admirable

management of so stubborn an animal, and he declared his conviction, that Jack would stand fire as well as any horse with such a rider; besides, he insinuated to Norah that his master would be so proud, and so pleased to see two such ladies amongst the spectators, shewing off the saddle cloths and ribbands, which matched his uniform. They, therefore, instantly rode up to the best spot for seeing and being seen, regardless of fear, and perhaps not sorry to be conspicuous. Lady Helena indeed might be chiefly influenced by high animal spirits, which often incapacitated her from sober reflection; besides, she wished to shew she was not in the thraldom in which Norah always declared that she was held by fear of Lady Restormel, and, at all events, this morning she was resolved to prove to her she had still a will of her own, and was resolved to act on it. But offending Lady Restormel was one thing, and disobeying her mother another: and she would have meekly followed the servant had not Norah entreated her to stop, and

muttered something about servile fear—no freedom of will—no energy of character; all of which Lady Helena only too well understood, and to the influence of which she now weakly yielded.

"Tell Lady Erp," said Norah, "that we are so well placed here, we cannot possibly stir; and that Jack and Bob are very tractable and pretty behaved."

This message, however, did not satisfy the anxious mother, and she wrote a pencil note to Lady Restormel, to beg her to invite Lady Helena to come to her.

Lady Restormel, though not as much alarmed, was more annoyed at Lady Helena's refusal than her mother was, and did as she was desired to do, but the messenger could not get near her, for the review was begun, and horsemen were gathering before him in close ranks; amongst whom he now saw Lord Aston, who had driven home, and had come on horseback to the field: in another moment he heard piercing shrieks, and saw Lord Aston spur his horse to get to the foremost

rank. The shrieks were from Lady Erpingham; and the action of Lord Aston was a desperate effort to save his sister from destruction; for the ass, though hitherto governable, on the horses coming forward full gallop in a charge, sprung forward as if to meet them; and the whole troop would have gone over him and Lady Helena, who could controul and turn him aside no longer, had not Lord Aston forced his way to the front, thrown himself off his horse, and snatched Lady Helena off the animal just as the danger seemed inevitable. He then sunk down on the ground, and Lady Helena, nearly fainting, lay beside him! The poor animal escaped with little or no hurt; but Lord Aston, in the jirk of throwing himself off, had dislocated his left shoulder, and was scarcely able (oppressed both with pain, and recent terror), to desire to be taken to Laurel Grove immediately—having said this, he fainted: and when Sophia made her way, even before the terrified mother, to the scene of alarm, the first object she saw

was Lord Aston apparently dead. On all occasions of alarm hitherto, Sophia had been distinguished by presence of mind, and power of salutary exertion—but now she stood stony and motionless, with her eyes wildly fixed on the death-like figure before her, and unable to ask whether he really breathed or not. At this moment his senses returned, his eyes unclosed, and they met those of Sophia, fixed in unutterable woe upon him; but, now bursting into uncontrollable tears of joy, as she saw him recover unto life, though into the consciousness of bodily agony at the same moment—but that he disregarded; Sophia's look had betrayed to him the secret of her heart, and while he grasped her offered hand, he murmured—"I am too happy in mind to regard my bodily pain; I saved Helena,"—and his eyes only spoke the rest: and when Lady Erpingham, Sophia, and the sister and the brother were seated in the barouche, and on their way to Laurel Grove, Lady Helena was the only one whose gratitude for the mercy vouchsafed,

was over-clouded; but she was bowed to the earth by the consciousness of her own obstinate disobedience; and though full of pleasurable feelings, for having her life saved, through the agency of her beloved brother, she was full of remorse for having endangered both his and hers by her own headstrong folly. The shoulder was soon replaced, but Lord Aston was desired to go to his bed, and keep quiet, and when he had seen Sophia, and once more received from her an answering look to that with which he beheld her, he was contented to retire and allow the depressed and penitent Helena to read him to sleep. Norah, who had herself been unseated, and who had reluctantly accepted a place on Lady Restormel's carriage, when she was forced in decency to follow her aunt and cousins from the ground, now flattered herself, and so did the Miss Nanbys, that all the party who liked it would return to the breakfast; but Lady Restormel had been too much alarmed and agitated to be their chaperon,

and they had no other. Accordingly, the carriages were dismissed; but Norah set off again, privately, on her ass, accompanied by Benson's servant, who carried his master's portmanteau before him; and it was hours before any one enquired what was become of her.

When Lady Helena left her brother's room, she repaired to that of her mother, who was forced to lie down after the excessive fright which she had received. There she found Sophia, who, as soon as she saw her, begged to know how she could ever think of going in such a style to the review.

"I will tell you why," she replied, "as I always wish to exculpate myself in your eyes as much as I can, and in going as I did, I am not much to blame. My fault was, not dismounting in obedience to my mother's will and common sense. I firmly refused to go on an ass, till I found that if Norah and I went in the carriage, the poor Nanbys would be disappointed; I therefore sacrificed regard of appearances to

benevolence, and had I stopt there, all would have been well."

"You were governed by a shewy, plausible motive; but, I suspect, your first duty was to consider a more every-day duty than that of benevolence, to the poor Nanbys, namely, consideration for your parents, and your lover's feelings."

"My parents' feelings, if you please, Miss Brightwen; but," she haughtily replied, "I will not be a slave to a lover."

"No! poor Lord Restormel, how glad I am he did not see your danger! how glad I am he did not see you, as I saw your brother! It would have been to him, agony, madness!"

"Do you think so?" said Lady Helena, softened and affected.

"I know so; I know his noble heart dotes on you; and, surely, even the prejudices of such a man are to be considered!"

"Sophia!" said Lady Helena, bursting into tears, "my narrow escape from death, has humbled me to the dust, spite of my late haughty seeming, and I feel that I am

not worthy the love of such a man as Restormel. I not only am not capable of always acting up to what he thinks right, but I do not always see the harm of what he disapproves, therefore there is no hope for me of permanent amendment."

Sophia shook her head mournfully, and replied, "You know yourself best; I can only pray for you, and urge you to pray for yourself."

She then returned to the drawing-room, where she had left Lady Restormel and the Miss Nanbys, the former of whom, though more fit for bed than to entertain company, made a point of staying with these ladies in the absence of the rest, lest in their fallen fortunes, they should fancy themselves slighted. But had she known their nature and temper, she would not have been so kindly regardful of their feelings. Never benevolent, but always, even in prosperity, given to petty detraction; disappointment and a narrow income had not improved their characters, and they were become less indulgent in their strictures than ever.

The youngest of them had once danced with Lord Restormel, and had fancied that his only common attentions had been particular ones; she, therefore, heard with displeasure that he was engaged to Lady Helena Fortescue, and even then did not entirely believe it: she, however, readily believed the common assertion, that Lady Restormel disapproved the marriage, on account of the eccentricity of Lady Helena. She, therefore, weakly imagined that she should gain that lady's good opinion, by blaming Lady Helena's conduct of that day; and was in the midst of sundry flings against uncommon people, eccentric geniuses, and the wisdom of the old proverb, "that common sense was the best of all sense," and that if Lady Helena had been like other people, Lord Aston's arm would not have been put out, and other people would not have been disappointed, when Sophia entered the room; and in all these remarks her sisters cordially joined, especially commending this last.

"It really is a pity that with such

fine qualities Lady Helena should so expose herself, and do such out of the way things; but, indeed, as I say, she has no regard for the feelings of others; why go to the review on an ass at all? How eccentric and uncommon!"

"Uncommon, indeed!" cried Sophia, her dark eye beaming with resentment, and her pale cheek became crimson with emotion; "uncommon, indeed, for her motive was purely a benevolent one; Lady Helena Fortescue accused of having no regard for the feelings and wishes of others, and this by you, ladies!"

"And why not by us, Miss, I really forget your name."

"Indeed, my dear friend," said Lady Restormel, smiling, and wondering at a violence so unusual in Sophia; "hitherto I never saw you so moved before." She then explained, and declared that the eccentricity of that day, for which they were so severely blaming Lady Helena, arose entirely from the benevolent wish of giving them pleasure.

The cheeks of the three sisters turned pale with vexation, instead of glowing with generous and grateful feelings, when they heard this; and Miss Bridget Nanby, observed, that she was really glad Lady Helena Fortescue had so good an excuse for her oddity; for her part she was not fond of owing obligations.

"No, indeed, nor we either," said her sisters, both at once.

"And," resumed Miss Bridget, "had we known that Lady Helena was exposing herself for our sake, we would not have accepted the offer on any account."

"As to the exposure of her life, by remaining on the ass, that, I conclude, was to please herself, not us."

"Certainly; but it was her wish to oblige you which led her into the temptation."

"Well, really, from any one but Lady Helena, this would look so like an excuse trumped up," resumed Miss Bridget.

"Yes, so it would," said Lady Restormel, "but not from Lady Helena For-

tescue—to her lips falsehood is a stranger. Good morning, ladies." She then, with all the haughty contempt in her manner, which she so well knew how to assume, left the room, leaning on the arm of Sophia.

Not long after a servant came in to say that Lady Restormel's carriage waited the orders of the Miss Nanbys if they wished to return home, as Lady Erpingham and Lady Helena were too unwell to enjoy their company.

The mortified girls, conscious that they had given their tongue too great a license, and sure that if they ever came to Laurel Grove again, it must be owing to the generous silence of Lady Restormel and Sophia, ordered the carriage round immediately and drove home.

Poor Lady Helena had just dicovered, by the violent pain she felt, and her inability to raise it to her head, that she had strained her left arm, by her resistance, as she supposed, to the headstrong animal which she rode, and her endeavours to rein him in when he plunged forward on the approach

of the troops, else she was too kind and courteous not to have made an effort, however painful, to entertain the Nanbys, and make them some amends for the loss of the splendid breakfast. Lady Restormel and Sophia, therefore, were almost glad of this additional reason for obtaining leave to send these ungrateful and back-biting girls away, and found it rather difficult to keep to themselves their conviction how little they deserved the kindness of Lady Helena.

"Well, Miss Brightwen," said Lady Restormel, when she was left alone with Sophia, "I suspect that you are disappointed at my not extolling Lady Helena's motives for going to the review on an ass, especially as you know, and I know, that but for the ill results of her folly she would never have excused it by telling her benevolent reasons."

"I own," said Sophia, "that I did expect you would, though you must in justice blame her refusing to quit the ass when the purpose was answered."

"My dear friend, I admire the motives, and the secret unostentatious kindness of Lady Helena as much as you do; but alas! it is not on a power of performing out of the way actions of kindness in the woman he marries that a husband's peace depends, but on a capability of performing common unobtrusive actions, and making little sacrifices, especially of the will, that the happiness of married life rests."

"Say no more, dear madam," said Sophia, "I cannot bear to hear my opinion on this subject so strongly confirmed by your's; I, myself, have said something equivalent to this, on the false and the true duty, to Lady Helena, and she felt the truth of what I said so strongly, and I am myself so convinced of it, that I must earnestly request you to drop the subject."

Lady Restormel sighed, and obeyed her. But where was Miss Netherby all this time—the original cause of all the mischief? At dinner time, and not before, it was thought advisable to search for her in the grounds, but no where could she be

found. A letter was, however, brought that evening from her to Lady Helena, in which she said, that, as poor Benny, not being of age, could not be married in England, without consent of guardians, and guardians were gruff old fogrums, he and she had thought proper to ask the aid of the kind blacksmith to rivet their fetters; that she had ridden the first stage on the ass, that there Benny had joined her, and before the week was at an end, she and her hubby should throw themselves at her uncle's feet to crave his blessing, and also his superintendence of the draft of her marriage settlement.

This event was a source of satisfaction to Sophia and Lady Restormel at least, as it gave this obnoxious girl, or would soon give her, a home of her own, and remove her from Lady Helena; but the countess and her daughter could not approve the manner in which the marriage took place, nor believe that Norah could be happy with a weak, thoughtless boy, for whom the

next face he saw might have more attraction than that of his wife; but the union could not be prevented, and they could only hope it would be a happy one.

At the end of the week Lord Restormel was expected, and till the day he was to arrive Lady Helena had worn her arm in a sling, not, as she pretended, to keep Lord Aston in countenance, but because her arm required the support; however, on the day on which he was expected she left off the sling.

"Why is this Helena?" said Lord Aston, who sooner recovered the effects of this accident than his sister did; "surely it would be for your interest to look as suffering and interestingly invalidish in Restormel's eyes as possible, in order to soften his heart in your favor, and make him readily excuse your foolish tricks."

"No, indeed," replied Lady Helena, colouring with violent emotion; "I should scorn to blind Lord Restormel's judgment, by working on his feelings; he shall acquit

or condemn me by his unbiassed judgment, and therefore it is, that I have left off my sling—I am too proud to owe his lenity to his pity."

"Bravo!—thou art a noble girl," said Lord Aston, "and I am really glad I was able, at some risk to myself, to save thee."

"Oh!" cried Lady Helena, throwing herself on his neck; "do not bring back to my mind a scene so horrible; yet as a proof of thy love, my brother! so dear! and see the remembrance has made our Sophia shudder, and her lip turn pale."

"Our Sophia," observed Lord Aston, tenderly, "I dared not have said so: but perhaps one day—"

In a moment Sophia left the room, but evidently not in anger.

When Lord Restormel arrived, his mother begged to see him in her own apartment, that she might tell him what had occurred at the review; and so favorable was the account which his mother gave of the circumstances, that her son could not help exclaiming—"Dear, generous

though rash girl---oh! had she been the victim of her temerity, I think I could not have survived it---it would have broken my heart---but where is she?"

At this moment Lady Helena entered, and while her lover clasped her to his breast, tears trembled in his eyes. "Then you are not hurt my beloved---not hurt at all?"

"Not much," she replied; and as she looked well and blooming at that moment, Lord Restormel was satisfied; but assured her he should presume to lecture her the next day.

It so happened that Lord Restormel sat next Lady Erpingham at dinner that day, and on the opposite side to Lady Helena, who, spite of the pain she felt, persevered in not using her sling; till at last Sophia, who had been watching her countenance, disappeared, and returned with the sling, insisting on her wearing it immediately. As soon as Lord Restormel saw the sling, and also beheld the lip and eye of Lady Helena, he started from his seat, and supporting her in his arms, ex-

claimed—"Then you have all deceived me, and she is hurt!—why this concealment from me, and why did she not wear the sling?"

Lady Helena, now too faint to remain in the room, was led into the air by her lover and her friend; while the latter repeated in Lord Restormel's ear the reply which Lady Helena had made to Lord Aston. Lord Restormel ardently kissed the cold hand which he held, as he heard what she communicated, but he also sighed deeply. Perhaps he thought what he dared not even embody in words to himself, namely, that the woman whose virtues were so sure to throw her faults, however prominent, into the back ground immediately, and could even make a fault the means of bringing forth a virtue, was never likely to be cured of her errors, but would continue to be a source of alternate pride and uneasiness to her lover, or her husband.

## CHAP. XIX.

But to return to Julia, to whom Lady Helena and Miss Brightwen wrote almost every day, and who, therefore, knew all Lady Helena's weaknesses, and their results; she also knew, but not from Sophia, that the attachment between her and Lord Aston was now visible to every eye, and that the family were as impatient as Lord Aston for the arrival of the period when he could, with propriety, plead his suit, and Sophia listen to it.

Well, then, at last, said Julia to herself, my best friend will be happy as she deserves to be; but will my dear Helena be happy—it will be her own fault if she is not, and happy she might now be if she would.

"Now, do not think I am romancing," wrote Julia to Sophia, "when I say that I am thankful for not being tried with such

means of perfect happiness as Lady Helena is, because I see that a state of prosperity is one of danger. I am contented to suffer while I know that I do not seek nor make my own suffering, but that the painful circumstances in which I am placed are made for me by others."

But Julia deceived herself, some of her trials she made for herself, by her want of openness of character; had she been ingenuous—had she allowed the eye of faithful friendship to see the bottom of her heart, that heart would have been soon lightened of its heaviest load. The evident change in Aubrey's manner to her, when they were *tête-à-tête,* and in Lady Villeroy's manner to him. The latter every day assumed the appearance of tender attachment, and the former also; but though her presence was no restraint to the expression of Lady Villeroy's fondness for him, that lady's presence evidently restrained the expression of Aubrey's towards her. Another circumstance also occurred which worried though it did not

afflict her; in short, she saw so clouded a future before her, that she felt more and more anxious every day for Fortescue's return, and was eagerly expecting the letter which was to announce it.

One Sunday morning just as she came from church, and had stopped in the dinner parlour to rest herself before she ascended the high stone stairs, she saw a hackney coach stop at the door, and soon after heard a voice, which she thought no stranger to her ear, exclaim---"Pay my coach for me, my fine fellow, I have not a sous, 'pon honor!"

"I have no silver, sir," was the reply.

"No; then ask Julia to give you some, she's rich, so is the old one, but she is stingy."

"Julia, sir; who is that?"

"Why the heiress, Julia Villeroy to be sure; is she not at home."

"Yes, sir, but—"

"No buts, my fine fellow, I will ask her myself; where is she---we are old friends." The door was now thrown open,

and Mansfeldt appeared; "How do, do—how do, do?" said he, putting out his hand, "glad to see you, pale and pretty one."

Julia drew back from his offered hand, and coldly curtsied in silence; but nothing daunted, he leered up in her face, and said, "Lend me a handful of shillings, will you, to pay my coach?"

"I have no silver," she replied.

"No matter, a pound will do just as well."

Julia now remembered what Lord Restormel said of his embarrassments, and pitying, perhaps weakly, his pecuniary distress, she gave him a pound-note, and saw, with a mixed feeling of compassion and contempt, the eager and delighted haste with which he seized it. He then disappeared, leaving Julia full of wonder at seeing him at Lady Villeroy's, as she did not know he was acquainted with her in his prosperous days, and Lady Villeroy was not at all likely to seek acquaintance with him in his adversity.

When he returned she held out her hand for the change, but he only raised it forcibly to his lips, saying—"You and I will settle some other time Julia, for I trust we shall meet again and again, you know we are very fond of each other, are we not?" Here he grinned with a look so malicious and diabolical, that Julia almost shuddered, and was too uncomfortable to reply.

Aubrey now entered the room, and, by their manner of greeting Julia, saw that Mansfeldt came to visit him, and that they were old and intimate friends; her good opinion of Aubrey was not encreased by the discovery, conscious too as she was that Mansfeldt disliked her, and that Aubrey had designs on her; a sensation of alarm and in security came over her, which she had great difficulty in concealing, and she took the earliest opportunity of leaving the room, but not before she had heard Mansfeldt say in a low voice—

"Well, how get you on with the old

lady? will love conquer avarice think you?"

"Oh! my poor father," said Julia, mentally, when she reached her apartment, throwing herself in an agony of tears upon the bed. Is it thus your widow honors your memory! and will she squander your bounty upon an unprincipled man like this! When she was summoned to dinner her eyes bore evident marks of the many tears she had shed, and on her entrance Mansfeldt affectedly exclaimed, "Lo! here she is—like Niobe, all tears."

"Tears indeed!" cried Lady Villeroy, "I cannot think Miss Villeroy what you should be always crying for; but I suppose Captain Fortescue has told you that you look prettiest in tears." At this speech Julia saw Aubrey change colour, and an expression which she could not define passed across his brow.

"What! Marcus, talk to her about pretty looks now? No, no—that is all off; is it not Julia?" said Mansfeldt.

"I know not what you mean, sir," was Julia's reply. "I had a letter from Captain Fortescue to-day."

"What, a love-letter! no, no surely not!" Then turning to Aubrey, he said—"Why I thought Marcus was again after you know whom."

"How can you be so indiscreet," replied Aubrey in a low voice, colouring and frowning at him; then speaking as loud as usual, he said—"I thought all the world knew that Miss Villeroy was the betrothed of Captain Fortescue, and he consequently the most enviable and happy man in the world."

"That I doubt, even if Julia be his betrothed; but let that pass."

"To describe Julia's secret agonies while this conversation was passing is impossible; but she forced herself to sit through the dinner and dessert also, lest she should seem to credit what Mansfeldt said; nor dared she trust her voice to reply to it; but she endeavoured to find

amusement in watching her maratre's countenance, while Mansfeldt was cutting up and eating up some nice things intended to be reserved for the dinner of next day, and pouring down bumpers of Madeira,—while Aubrey governing Lady Villeroy with his eye, and seeming to forbid objections with an air of authority, desired a fresh bottle when the first two were finished. It was in vain that Mansfeldt called his hostess Minerva, Juno, Venus, grown becomingly fat, and lastly Queen Elizabeth, and uttered all the comical absurdities he could get together. His attack on the cellar, steeled her heart against his flattery, and when on her rising to leave the room, he, in imitation of the gallant Raleigh threw down his coat for her to walk upon; instead of being charmed by the courteous action, she pettishly exclaimed—"Take up the coat, silly man, directly, it is so dirty it will spoil my carpet!"

"Julia," said she, when they were alone "I am really afraid there is some truth

in what that queer man said, for I always thought Captain Fortescue but a slippery blade, so look after him sharply! that is my advice!" Julia did not, could not reply, but hastening to her own room, she laid the burthen of her sorrows at the feet of him, "who heareth prayer;" and arose from her knees, comforted and calm. Lady Villeroy herself came to summon to tea, and seemed surprised to see how composed her countenance was.

"Pray, madam," said Julia, "is it true that Mr. Mansfeldt is likely, as he says, to be your guest often?"

"Oh! dear me! I am sure I hope not; did you not see what an appetite he has, and then he drinks like a fish: I am glad to find you paid this coach hire, I was afraid it would be charged to me in the bill. No, no, once a week will be too often—and I am happy to say he cannot come oftener, for he can only go out on a Sunday for fear of being arrested."

"Is he very intimate with Mr. Aubrey?"

"A very old friend of his indeed; therefore, I let him come; I cannot disoblige Mr. Aubrey. It is so convenient for a rich widow to have a cousin in the law—I get my law business done for nothing."

"But is Mr. Aubrey a practising lawyer? Why not much; as to that he was brought up to the law, but the women spoiled him, and he was abroad with a mistress, a married woman, many years; but now he repents, and is quite reformed; and really if a woman does marry again, it is proper and necessary that she should choose for a husband, a man who knows something of business, and can take care of her affairs himself; for your lawyers, and stewards, and agents, are rapacious wretches, my dear, take my word for it." Julia said nothing, she only sighed while she thought of her father; but she earnestly wished that Fortescue was returned, and she removed from the improper protection of this weak and narrow-hearted woman. Nothing worth relating occurred

during the rest of the evening, but Mansfeldt was so disagreeable, though meaning to be otherwise, that Julia, spite of her disinterestedness, was very glad that he was unable to visit more than once a week. Still, how earnestly on many accounts did she desire the return of Fortescue! But her removal from her present unsuitable residence was sooner effected than she even hoped for. After giving her, when alone with him, unequivocal marks of his evident designs on her heart, short of making a positive declaration, Aubrey one morning ventured to seek her in her dressing-room, when he thought Lady Villeroy was out, and there he professed for her the most ardent and devoted of passions, declaring that he never truly loved till then, and till she was irrevocably the bride of Captain Fortescue, he never, never would give up the hope of calling her his. Unknown to him, the door was ajar, and while the distressed and offended Julia was vainly struggling to free her hand and waist from his bold grasp, Lady Villeroy, who from her own

room had watched him to Julia's apartment, now threw open the door, and pale and trembling stood in a paroxysm of passion before them ; I will not stain my pages with all the just abuse of Aubrey, and unjust accusations of Julia, which the enraged and jealous woman vented on the guilty and the innocent offender ; I shall only state that the vituperation ended in a command that Julia should quit the house that very day, or if allowed to stay, as she requested to do, till she could write to her friends and receive an answer, she was to do so only on condition that she never exchanged a word with Mr. Aubrey, who long before the storm ended had quietly withdrawn himself from its fury and left the house ; fortunately Captain Fortescue arrived at this very moment, and Julia, like a frightened bird, flew into his arms for shelter and protection ! Fear makes every one fond, and never before had Fortescue been so satisfied with any reception which Julia had given him. All her coldness, all her reserve was gone, she seemed to cling to him as her

only friend, her support, preserver, her lover, and every tender name in one—her husband! and while he folded her meagre form to his breast, and laid his glowing cheek to her pale and tearful one, he thought that though he might have loved more passionately before, he had never loved so sweetly and so tenderly! But Fortescue at length discovered that Julia's emotion did not proceed entirely from joy of his return, for she exclaimed at last—"Oh! take me away! take me away from hence directly?" Julia could not have laid on her lover a command which he was more willing to obey, as he had always disapproved her resolution to remain with her mother-in-law.

"Most gladly would I do so," he replied—"but why this hurry, Julia?"

"Oh! I am turned out! desired to go by Lady Villeroy!"

"And wherefore?"

"The cause is too absurd to relate," replied Julia, blushing, "but do not leave me here, take me with you!"

"I will not leave you, my beloved girl," replied Fortescue, "but you shall not go away with me, and me alone; no Julia, my mother, my sister, or our dear Miss Brightwen—Aston's Miss Brightwen, for such she now avowedly is, shall come to fetch you away, and in a manner befitting your situation in life."

"Oh! no, I cannot remain here till they come!"

"Yes you can, for they are in London; they arrived to-day, as the drawing-room is a week sooner than was expected." Then ringing for his servant, he wrote a few lines, and desired him to take them instantly to South Audley Street. "And then, my own Julia, safe under the protection of the best of women, you shall only leave her protection for that of her most happy son!" As he said this, Julia looked up earnestly, searchingly, and touchingly in his face; then, as if overcome by some sudden and overwhelming emotion, she fell back in his arms as if in the embrace of death. The violence with which the terrified Fortescue

rang the bell, alarmed even Lady Villeroy, and she rushed into the room, but seeing what had happened, she coolly desired Miss Villeroy's maid would see after her mistress, for that she did not understand fits.

"What means this unnatural barbarity, madam?" cried Fortescue, as soon as Julia was recovered, and the maid had left the room, "what can that unoffending sweetness have done, for you to treat her thus?"

"Done! I only found a cousin of mine in her dressing-room making love to her—that's all!"

"How!" he exclaimed, gasping for breath, "but it is impossible; I was to blame to believe it even for an instant. Julia, my love, speak and resent the infamous charge."

"It is a true charge," replied Julia, forcing a smile; "but, as Lady Villeroy knows the love was made against my will, the scene was full as disagreeable to me as it was to her."

" 'Tis false ; my cousin is not a man to have hazarded such conduct had he not been led to suppose it would not be disagreeable."

" Who is this gentleman, madam ?" said Fortescue turning very pale ; " what is his name, and where does he live ?"

" Do not tell him ! I conjure you not to tell him," cried Julia ; " do you not see what you have done ?" Lady Villeroy understood her, and being as much alarmed for consequences to Aubrey as Julia was for Fortescue, she declared that she would not reveal the name of the gentleman, and she hoped Julia would be equally discreet. Fortescue, on the contrary, was resolved not to let Julia rest till he had heard on this subject all that she could possibly tell, for her concealment of the name might proceed from regard for the unknown as well as for himself, and jealousy is usually inseparable from love. But in the midst of this unpleasant altercation, Lady Erpingham's carriage drove up, and the countess sent in her name. Lady Villeroy, however, refused

to see her; and leaving her maid to collect her things together, Julia eagerly seized Fortescue's arm, having vainly tried to shake Lady Villeroy's hand in friendship before they parted, and in another moment she was seated by the side of her mother's friend, and clasped to her maternal bosom. Fortescue was in South Audley Street, where they had hired a house for a month, as soon as they were; he also found his sister and Sophia just returned from a walk; they were mourning together over the account he gave them of Julia's altered looks, when Julia appeared; at sight of each dear familiar face, she felt herself quite well; nay more, quite happy? When the first emotions of meeting, and with the added joy of knowing they were met not soon to part again, had subsided, Captain Fortescue with more perturbation than he wished, desired leave to lay his case before them, and to ask whether they did not think he had great reason to be jealous, for that, even by Julia's own confession, he had a rival who was allowed to make love to her

in her dressing-room. His audience, when he had told his tale, were clearly of his opinion, and called on Julia for her defence; and when she had given her statement, beginning with Aubrey's first arrival in Gloucester Place, then describing Mansfeldt's visit, her conversation with Lady Villeroy, and lastly, the scene in her dressing-room, she was declared fully exculpated, and Fortescue forbidden to be jealous. He was also forbidden to know the name of his rival, and Julia was pronounced fully equal to defend herself from his pursuit, and revenge her own quarrels. Fortescue was obliged to submit to the decision, nor could he be jealous with any reason of this uknown lover, for he could not be, as he at first was inclined to think him, the cause of Julia's mysterious coldness, as that existed long before, according to her own account, she had ever seen this man; and certainly in Julia's reception of him that day, there was every mark of the fondest attachment; therefore, he dismissed his jealousy, but still he wished the cir-

cumstance had not happened, and he wished still more, that he knew the name of the unknown.

The next day, when Julia, whose spirits had been kept up the day before, and her cheek flushed from the joy she felt in being reunited to her friends, made her appearance at breakfast, she excited general alarm in all who beheld her. Lord Aston had never seen her before, and he, when he surveyed her thin form and pale cheek, looked at his brother with a glance expressive of the tenderest pity, while the rest of the party, who had known her a fat and blooming girl, could scarcely conceal the anxiety which she occasioned them. Marcus, indeed, was so distressed that he suddenly left the room, and sent for the earl out, to conjure him to let his mother hasten with Julia immediately to Clifton, or Hastings, or whithersoever the medical men should advise them to go; and begging him to suggest to Sophia the necessity of urging Julia to have advice directly. The equally affectionate and alarmed

hearts of his mother, his sister, and Sophia, had already suggested all he wished; and Julia, though declaring her conviction that she was quite well, but had been prayed upon by the disagreeableness of her late situation, consented readily to have advice, and also to oblige Fortescue, though assured by the physician that her complaint was only nervous; she as readily consented to go to Clifton, as soon as Lady Erpingham and her other friends could accompany her.

In the meanwhile she seemed to recover her looks daily for many successive days, but suddenly she drooped again; and on asking Lady Helena whose plan it was that she should go to Clifton, and hearing it was Fortescue's, she changed colour, and burst into tears; an emotion which Lady Helena very naturally attributed to the proof which the proposal was of her lover's tender anxiety.

The next day Fortescue went down to Bristol, where an old friend of his resided, and on whose account he preferred Clifton

to Hastings, in order to see if he could find a convenient house or lodging in the neighbourhood, for his mother and her guests ; and having succeeded to his satisfaction, he returned in high spirits, but was evidently disappointed at the excessive coldness with which Julia received his delighted assurance, that he had hired an excellent house, with a beautiful garden to it, within a short drive of the Wells.

" I would rather have gone anywhere than to Clifton," replied Julia, almost pettishly; and while Fortescue changed colour, and stood speechless with painful and almost angry surprise, Julia attributed his change of countenance and silence to other causes, and to conceal her agony suddenly quitted him.

" That dear girl is very ill, Helena, very ill, indeed!" said he to his sister, " for her temper is changed, and she is grown pettish, and difficult to please!"

" She must be ill indeed, then," replied Lady Helena; " where is she?" but, without waiting for his reply, she went to

Julia's apartment, and found her in tears; but she persisted to declare that she had nothing to reveal, as their medical attendant and her friend believed they had their source only in physical suffering; but Lady Helena lamented that the ceremony of her presentation, which she would fain have deferred till Julia could be presented with her, would keep Lady Erpingham in London some days, and prevent their instant removal to Clifton.

## CHAP. XX.

If Julia's appearance at court was comparatively a time of indifference to Lady Helena, it was one of positive anxiety to Lord Restormel; for, as yet, Lady Helena had never been in the court circle; and few men besides himself and Lord Clanross, who had pretensions to address her, had been admitted in the circle of Laurel Grove. But now she would be exposed to the admiration and addresses of men, of higher rank than himself, and also to all the dangers and temptations of a London life; for it was the earl's intention to remain two or three months at least in London, that Lady Helena might see something of high life; and (which he earnestly desired) might see enough of its emptiness and heartlessness, to settle down cheerfully as a domestic married woman: and though forced to live in the metropolis

when her lord attended his parliamentary duties, should only wish to enjoy the best and only precious privilege of a residence in London, namely, that of assembling round her table, those persons, of both sexes, distinguished for their talents, their learning, their conversational powers, and their public and private virtues.

The earl also wished to give Lady Helena an opportunity of being convinced, that she preferred Lord Restormel to all other men; for, hitherto, she had only seen him where he had none to compete with him. But Lord Restormel himself, now that the time for this opportunity of conviction to Lady Helena was arrived, shrunk from it with all the timidity and self-distrust of a man who truly loves; and when he heard that Mr. Seebright, Lady Helena's cousin, told every one that, though Lady Helena had accepted Lord Restormel, it was only on condition that they were quite free to part, if he or she desired it: he felt himself a prey to jealous apprehension, vague in its objects, indeed,

at present, but looking forward to its having only too soon an object and a particular cause.

I dare not analyze with accuracy the feelings of Lady Helena, when the day of her appearance at court arrived. Often, during her intercourse with Lady Restormel and her lover, her self-consequence and pride had been wounded, and especially since she had heard certain hints and insinuations from Norah Netherby, by the idea that the former, at least, thought her inferior to her son in worth, and that it was a great favour done to her to be accepted as the bride of Restormel; while her lover, she thought, valued his hand and heart at so high a rate, that he imagined a woman ought to make any sacrifices, with cheerfulness, to ensure a continuance of his favour, and a fulfilment of his promises; "but, surely," whispered pride, "I, Lady Helena Fortescue, an earl's daughter, with a large independent fortune, and with no mean personal or mental advantages, have a right to expect

to require not make sacrifices; therefore I would not have Restormel too sure of obtaining me after all!"

But, what said love? what said justice? as Lady Helena looked on her lover's expressive countenance, gazed on his manly form, and listened to the touching eloquence of his heart, breathed in the deep and mellow tone of his persuasive voice, and above all, when her judgment dwelt on the long list of his public and private virtues; it told, indeed, a different story to that of self-love; it talked of the joy of making sacrifices for such a man, and Lady Helena, with a sigh, wished herself already the wedded wife of Restormel.

Not long before the expected day arrived, Lady Helena received the following letter, dated from Restormel's house in Berkely Square:

"Here I am, dear girl, come to London, and I want your assistance and advice. You must go with me to my milliner's, for, spite of age and approaching infirmities, I am going to the drawing-room. One of my motives, my wish to

pay my duty to my sovereign on his accession to the throne; but there is yet another and a dearer motive, Helena, the wish to see my son's future bride presented, and enjoy the admiration which she cannot fail to excite. I go also to do her the honor and pay her all the respect in my power, and prove my approbation of Restormel's choice. Yes, Helena, not only your own real mother shall emerge from her long years of retirement, and struggle with indisposition, in order to introduce her child, but she who is your mother only in heart and prospect, will once more make an effort to overcome illness, and distaste to such scenes, and enjoy the expected triumph of the child of her affection, and the son of her bosom. But you must come and choose a dress for me worthy the occasion, and of you.

"Your affectionate

"Olivia Restormel."

When Lady Helena read this letter the first time, it was with unmixed feelings of delighted and grateful surprise; but on the second and third reading she fancied it

was intended to impress her with a sense of obligation for the great honor she meant to do her, and was an ostentatious, offensive claim on her gratitude. Besides, it seemed as if she wished to show the world that Lady Helena was really property, and that Lady Restormel, by appearing at court, in her party, after an absence of many years from such places, meant to mark out that Lady Helena was the betrothed wife of her son, and, flattering condescension! with her entire approbation. But the next moment Lady Helena chid herself for ingratitude and waywardness of feeling, and was really ashamed of herself when Sophia, to whom she showed the letter, saw in it nothing but what the affectionate writer meant, and wondered Lady Helena could be so long putting on her hat and shawl, when she was to see Lady Restormel, after having received such a letter from her.

Lady Helena went and found the welcome all her best feelings could desire, and her bad ones for awhile, at least, slumbered, and she forgot what she now too often remembered, namely, that Lord Res-

tormel loved her against his judgment, and Lady Restormel permitted his addressing her against her will.

At length the hour of presentation arrived, and Julia and Sophia, almost wishing they could have been of the party, saw the earl and countess accompanied by Captain Fortescue and Lady Helena set off for court. Lord Aston had attended the levee, but was unable to attend the drawing-room, as his little boy was very ill, and he was forced to go to Laurel Grove. Lady Restormel went with her son; her expectations that Lady Helena would be generally admired were fulfilled to their utmost extent; but while Lord Restormel beheld with fearful pleasure the evident triumph of his mistress, he was equally proud of the marked respect and welcome admiration with which his still lovely mother had been received; and, as he led her through the rooms, dividing his attention between her and Lady Helena, the latter overheard two young men say to each other. "Look, there's Restormel; no eyes, as usual, but for his old mother; and really she is a

noble and beautiful looking ruin; it is a pity he cannot marry her, I am sure he will never marry, for he can never cordially love or admire any other woman, for he thinks her a paragon, and the only woman therefore worthy him."

This was poison to the feelings of Lady Helena, and when Lord Restormel approached her, after having procured a seat for his mother till her carriage could get up, she received him with such coldness, and turned with such eagerness to resume her conversation with a young marquis just returned from abroad, who had not rested till he was presented to her, so fascinated had he been with her appearance, that all the anticipated pangs of jealousy were, he found, nothing to what he at that moment experienced, and he almost regretted that his necessary attention to the parent whom he idolized, forced him to leave Lady Helena to the services and attentions of the marquis.

As they drove home, Lady Restormel, unconscious of what had happened to distress her son, complimented him on the

complete success which had attended the woman of his heart, and wondered at his cold replies. "During the little time," said she, "that I stayed in the rooms, I observed a little circle of admirers had gathered round her; but who was that tall, elaborately dressed young man, who seemed so particularly attentive to her?"

"That travelled coxcomb," replied Lord Restormel, changing colour; "oh, that was the Marquis of L.; so you observed his attention, did you?"

"Yes, but not with pain;" then laying her hand expressively on his arm, she added in the words of Iago, smiling as she did so, "Oh, my lord, beware of jealousy!"

Lord Restormel forced a smile, but was glad to be prevented replying by their arrival in Berkeley Square, whence he was going to South Audley Street to learn if Lady Helena was returned, when he was summoned to his mother in her dressing-room, who, having at the impulse of affection, made an effort beyond her strength, had fallen into a long and deep swoon, and had, on her recovery, desired to see her

physician and her son. The latter when he saw her, and heard what had happened, forgot his jealousy, and even his love, in terror for his mother's life.

Lady Helena returned home in high spirits; her vanity had been gratified to the utmost, and her heart also, for she saw how devoted to her the heart of her lover was, spite of the remark she had overheard by his change of colour and countenance, when she received him so coldly, and talked with Lord L.; and all her best feelings led her to glory in having subjected the guarded heart of such a man. Lady Helena's filial love also led her to enjoy the openly avowed pleasure which her parents felt from her reception from royalty, and the sort of sensation which she excited, while Fortescue bluntly exclaimed, "On the word of a sailor, my mother and you, Helena, were the most beautiful women at court."

"For shame, Marcus," cried the countess, "what gross flattery to name me with your young sister."

"He only speaks the truth of you," said the earl affectionately; "and even while I recalled the pride and pleasure with which I first led you, Augusta, into that circle, I gazed on you at that moment with equal, if not greater pleasure, from feeling how much the wife was dearer than the bride. As to Helena she is young and new, else—"

"What else?" said Helena; "something meant in paternal prudence to mortify my vanity, I dare say; but, oh, those precious tears!" she exclaimed, seeing that her father's observation had affected her mother. "What a happy woman shall I be, if, after being five and thirty years a wife, I may be able to shed them, and for such a cause!"

"They are sweet and precious tears, indeed," said the countess. "But, my dear lord, I cannot allow you to think that Helena is not quite as handsome, if not handsomer than I am."

Julia and Miss Brightwen smiled with heartfelt, though transient pleasure, at the

account given by Fortescue of the praises he had heard of his sister's beauty and grace; but the joy of the first was soon clouded again by some unknown causes, and that of the latter by a letter from Lord Aston, stating, that he had carried down his own travelling physician with him, who had known his son from his birth, and that he had declared that he believed his only chance for life was being removed into his native air—that of Nice; that he must therefore take him thither immediately, and that his friend thought his own health would also be benefitted by the change.

This letter distressed the whole party, as well as Sophia, especially as Lady Erpingham was not strong enough to undertake the care of a sick child; and though Lady Helena was willing to accompany her brother, and even give up the society of her lover, and the as yet untasted delights of London for his sake; her parents themselves, and Lord Aston, they were very sure, would not accept such a sacrifice.

Lord Aston soon followed his letter, and in such evident dejection that Sophia could scarcely bear to witness it, and could not grudge him the consolation of hearing her confess the misery the sight of his occasioned her. As soon as ever Lord Aston thought that decorum could not be violated by his confession of his love to Sophia, he had disclosed it to her, and received from her an avowal of mutual attachment—an attachment as tender as his own. "Ah, no!" replied Lord Aston, "that is impossible Sophia, you were tenderly attached to another; but I never really loved any woman but you."

"But he whom I loved," she replied, "was not the friend of one whom I doted on, and doted on by him. Oh, Lord Aston! when I remember how many ties bind me to you, and reflect what joy our union would give to him we have lost, if he were permitted to witness it, I feel a tenderness and a nearness of union with you, which I could not have, and never could have had with any other man."

"I believe it," replied he, "and that makes me hope, and emboldens me:" but he suddenly quitted her, leaving the sentence unfinished; and Sophia was depressed and absent the whole of the ensuing day, though she tried to interest herself in Lady Helena, and her vicissitudes of feeling. "Why do you keep your court head-dress on, Lady Helena," said she.

"Oh! because Mrs. W. is at home this evening, and Mrs. Seebright and I are going thither."

"Is Lord Restormel going also?"

"I declare I never asked him," was the answer; "but I know Lord L. will be there, for he told me so."

"And who is Lord L?"

"Oh, the Marquis of L., such a sweet creature!"

"I do not like the term, Lady Helena."

"Pretty prude, why not?"

"Would Lord Restormel like to hear you call any man a sweet creature."

"Perhaps not; but he must learn to like many things he does not like now, or

I may like Lord L., who knows?---it is very evident that he likes me, and has no paragon mother."

"Lady Helena!"

"Miss Brightwen!"

"Where is Lord Restormel?"

"Aye, where indeed----petting his mamma, I dare say, and can't spare time to pet me."

"So, so, it is only pique then, and I am easy."

"No, indeed, it is not pique only; I am in earnest, and Lord L. is in earnest, and only think it is almost time to dress for dinner, and no Restormel I declare; I will go to Mrs. W.'s whether he does or not."

Soon after Lord Restormel entered, and Lady Helena was going to show him by her manner that she was displeased at his long absence, when one glance at his pale cheek and altered mien substituted tender alarm, for resentment, in her bosom, and she asked him what had happened?

Lord Restormel could only answer,

" My mother, my poor mother! the exertion has been too much for her." He then told her that she was ordered to a foreign climate instantly. Away fled every feeling but those of pity, sorrow, and self-reproach from Lady Helena's heart. " And she wishes to see you, Helena," he added, " if not inconvenient to you, but I fear by that head-dress—"

" Fear nothing," she replied, tears streaming down her cheeks, as she hastily quitted him. She returned with her hair divested of its ornaments, and in a plain evening dress. " Now, then," said she, " take me to your dear mother instantly."

Sophia on hearing this, suddenly rose and kissed her cheek.

" Why was that?" said Lord Restormel.

" Lady Helena understands it," said Sophia, " and that is enough; so go, and ask no questions;" but a servant now came to say that Lady Restormel was too ill to see any one, she had evidently broken a blood vessel. Lady Helena's visit was con-

sequently delayed, but every feeling dearest to her heart made her refuse to go to Mrs. W.'s. assembly. It was well for her companions that she did so, as spite of her great anxiety for Lady Restormel, Lady Helena was able, from her powers of active love, and benevolent wish to forget her own cares in those of others, to keep up the painfully depressed spirits of every one in her family circle. Lord Aston had left them early to go and meet his children and their nurses on their road to London, and conduct them to the house of a friend of his, where they were to remain till every thing was ready for their setting off for the continent; but Sophia's spirits did not rise when she ceased to see his dejected countenance, and it was evident that she had something unusual weighing on her mind. That evening, before they separated for the night, Lord and Lady Erpingham requested to have a few moments conversation with her in her dressing-room. The conference was shorter, much shorter than they expected. The earl

was the speaker, and he began by begging Sophia to forgive him and the countess, if they, as parents, anxious for a child's happiness, ventured to say what Lord Aston could not, and would not presume to ask for himself.

"He could not ask what it is my duty to deny, my lord," was Sophia's eager reply.

"Heaven bless you for saying so," exclaimed the countess.

"But hear why Aston hesitates to do what we are going to do, it is, because he feels he has no right to cast the least shade on a character and conduct hitherto so spotless, by requesting you, in defiance of the world's censure, to let him lead you to the altar before the usual time has elapsed since the death of his wife, that you may be the companion of his journey, and the sharer of his duties; he has told you, perhaps, that poor little Everard is always saying, 'But where is dear, dear Miss Brightwen? she would make me well.'"

"No, indeed, he was too delicate to do

so under the existing circumstances," replied Sophia, struggling with her tears, "but let me hasten to say, that though I think under most circumstances it is one of the first duties of a woman to avoid the censure of the world if possible, it is not so in my case, and my first duty is to the object of my love and his dear children."

"Oh, welcome hearing!" cried the earl.

"Yes, my lord, I am only an obscure individual, scarcely known, and certainly not much valued out of your own circle and that I once filled in Norfolk, and if Lord Aston is willing to brave the censure he may incur by marrying me so soon, I have no right to shrink from it, and it will be his wife whom he exposes to it, not the humble Sophia Brightwen; and believe me that the cloud you witnessed on my brow this evening proceeded from my wish to offer to accompany Lord Aston as his wife, and the attached, affectionate nurse of his child, and struggling with the consciousness that delicacy forbade me to express that wish. Oh! my dear lord, you

have removed such a weight from my heart."

"And so have you from ours, ingenuous, right-hearted, sound-headed woman," replied Lord Erpingham; "happy will the man be who calls you wife, and the children that call you mother! all then that we now wait for is your father's consent, for that I will apply to-morrow." It was with a heart even more than usually grateful that Sophia that night offered up her thanks to the being who had created, and had so bountifully blessed her. Lord Aston came to breakfast the next day, little imagining what his father had done for him, and what happiness awaited him! It was then settled that at the end of a week he should receive the hand of Sophia from her father, who was to come to town for the purpose, and then set off for Dover with his bride and family: on the evening of the morning, which blessed Lord Aston with the prospect of calling Sophia his before he left England, Lady Restormel, who had a previous conference with Sophia, requested to see

Lady Helena, and with a beating heart the latter obeyed the summons.

"They are positive and peremptory with me my dearest girl," said she, as she tenderly welcomed the weeping Helena, "and they insist on my leaving England directly."

"But who is to go with you?" hastily interrupted Lady Helena.

"Oh! kind friends, but not Restormel; he is eager to acompany me, though at a sacrifice which would, I know, tear his heart—that of leaving you, but I will not accept it; besides, he has public duties to perform. I did for a moment think of asking Lord Erpingham to allow your union to take place directly, if you were not averse to it, that you might both accompany me abroad; but this would have been mere selfishness, and I also felt that all the objections to Restormel's being united to you now, and all your father's wise reasons against it, remain in their full force, therefore I am contented to go without him and you; but if it pleases the disposer of events to spare my life till I can

embrace you as my daughter in the place of my exile, I shall indeed think I have lived long enough, and shall depart in peace ?" Here she threw herself on Lady Helena's neck, who wept in agitated silence. " But it will not be," she continued, recovering her composure, " we must part, Helena, and I feel that we shall part for ever in this world."

" Do not, do not say so."

" I must, for it is the truth, but do not tell Restormel so; I therefore wish to perform the duty I owe you before I go, as we go very soon, and my companions on the journey, that is those with whom I travel in company, will be Lord Aston and his bride."

" I am so glad to hear it! Sophia will do for you all I could, and better too."

" No, not better, I have an excellent memory, and 'till this warm heart is cold, there will you be enthroned, Helena!"

" Oh! I am not worthy, I am not indeed of such."

" Hush! I will not hear you on such

a theme ; and now hear me, Helena, had I remained here, you would, strange as it may seem to you, have found a more indulgent judge of your actions in me than in Restormel. The gratitude I owed you, and the knowledge I obtained of your noble qualities, conquered all my prejudices against you, and I gave my heart to you without reserve ! But having done so, I felt myself pledged, even by my self-love, to excuse or overlook your faults if ever they should force themselves upon me, and if I, the severe Lady Restormel, approved you, who should dare to question the propriety of my son's choice ? Yet I believe I am not doing justice to my heart either, for you have so twined yourself round that heart, that my affection alone was sufficient to make me excuse you however you might err, and when you lose me, you will lose the firmest and most indulgent of friends."

" When I lose you ! talk not so, I cannot listen to it."

" Bear with me a little longer : I must

repeat, if you love Restormel be on your guard—he is proud, not more perhaps than becomes him; yet now, on the verge of the grave and of eternity, I feel the folly and the presumptuous daring of all pride, even the pride of virtue; but proud he is, and rigid he is in his ideas respecting the conduct of women, and spite of your charms, and of his consciousness of your power, the latter heightened no doubt by the obstacles which I opposed to his ever thinking of you as a wife, I am very certain that he would have struggled with his passion whatever it had cost him, had not your virtue made me also your conquest, and that the saviour of his mother became more lovely in his eyes than ever, and he was your's without one struggle, and without one evidence of your being changed in any one respect; but now the circumstances are materially altered—he has given you his invaluable heart, and you have given him your's in exchange. Now, then, Restormel considers you as bound by duties, and so far he is right; a

betrothed mistress is bound by ties nearly as much as a wife, and I am much deceived if Restormel will not expect little surrenders of your will to him now, as much as if you were his wife; and, if you really love him as much as he deserves to be loved, you will make them, Helena."

"But if he loves me, will he not be willing to make surrenders of his will to me? is not the obligation mutual?"

"In some cases, and in some points certainly, but not in those trifles in which a lover is tenacious, and which tenacity is often caused by a degree of delicate jealousy and holy admiration which a woman ought to delight in and to respect, even though it be often troublesome!"

"But how can one delight in what is troublesome, and often, perhaps, frivolous and vexatious?"

"What a lover exacts can never seem frivolous and vexatious in the eye of a woman who is really in love. I shall leave your heart to answer that question for me."

"But to what trifles do you allude? Can those who love quarrel about trifles?"

"Yes, and commonly about trifles only; yet, trifles having serious results—dress, for instance, a handkerchief too open, a tucker too low, a petticoat too short, a manner too flirting with other men, dancing with other men—waltzing I know you never indulge in; but should Restormel, justly or not, venture to find fault with your dress or your manner, I earnestly hope you will not let your woman's pride induce you to disregard what he says, but that you will think that noble heart worthy the surrender even of your better judgment on some points. If you are capable of this high-minded sacrifice, you will, you must be a happy woman, and my son a happy man; if not, you will never be happy united, for I foresee that you will part and be unhappy; but this is too horrible a prospect for me to dwell upon, it kills me. Now, farewell! dearest, dearest girl! I never loved woman as I love you! and to part with you is such agony, that I

cannot endure it again! Helena, think that you have heard me speak as if it was a voice from the tomb, and respect it accordingly! Heaven bless you! I can, and will pray for you long after I cease to see you, but I can bear to see you no longer! one more embrace, and then farewell for ever!"

Lady Helena again and again precipitated herself into those arms which now resigned, and now recalled her again, as if she foreboded that they indeed were never to meet more; and on Lord Restormel's entering, who came to announce the physician, she was led from the room by him in an agony of tender and overwhelming emotion.

"Why are you thus agitated, my beloved girl?" cried he, "I never saw you thus before; what has my mother said to you?"

"She has spoken like herself, but do not ask me to repeat what she said—I cannot; all I now wish is to go home and to bed."

Lord Restormel dared not enquire further, for he feared to hear that his mother had said that they should never meet again. While Lord Aston, and Sophia, and Lady Restormel, remained in London, Lady Helena devoted herself entirely to them, but she never was allowed to see the latter alone again, nor to take leave of her; with these precautions, Lady Restormel was better when she set off for Dover, whither her son accompanied her; Lord Aston the same morning received the hand of Sophia, and set off on his journey. The parting between Sophia and Julia was a very melancholy one, and the former could scarcely have been easy to leave her pupil, and one so long, one of the dearest objects of her affections behind her, even with friends so near and so beloved, had she not hoped that when seas rolled between them, distance and absence might open Julia's now closed heart to her entreaties, and that she would disclose to her at length the cause of that uneasiness which was evidently preying on her health, and

clouding over her prospects. Lord Aston had, to the joy of Sophia, invited Julia to accompany them abroad, but she had positively refused to do so; Captain Fortescue had also objected to it, but had promised, when Julia was his wife, to join Lord and Lady Aston at Nice, and to this arrangement Julia seemed to consent by her silence. At the earnest entreaty of Fortescue, Lady Erpingham and Julia went to Clifton the day after the travellers left London, and Lord Erpingham and Lady Helena remained in South Audley Street; but as London did not agree long with Lord Erpingham's health, he frequently went to Laurel Grove, leaving his daughter to partake of the pleasures of London under the protection of Mrs. Seebright.

## CHAP. XXI.

It is not my intention to follow Lady Helena to Almack's, and to all the various scenes of fashionable gaiety into which her dissipated friend led her, and in which the admiration she excited, and perhaps encouraged, gave many a jealous pang to the heart of her lover, and I may say, offended his sense of propriety, and militated in his opinion against his rights; but the attentions of Lord L. were so marked, that Lord Restormel thought, as a woman of honour, and one whose affections were already engaged, Lady Helena ought to discourage them. Lady Helena reasoned differently, and wrote thus to Lady Aston on the subject :—"I own that I am greedy of admiration, but not for its own sake, but Restormel's, ungrateful wretch as he is; and I wish, I confess, that Lord L. may

lay his strawberry-leaves and balls at my feet, that I may say to my dear lover, 'See what I refuse for your sake! a marquis, and the best dressed man in London;' but he says, 'As you know you never mean to marry Lord L. you are making him unhappy by seeming to encourage his suit.' I reply, 'He will be so angry at any woman's being able to refuse him, that he will be heart-whole again in a minute; besides it would be conceited and indelicate in me to act as if I supposed a man was in love with me, till he had really told me so;' on which he shakes his wise head; we quarrel, and make it up again; but the other evening, just as I had almost promised Lord L. to waltz with him in came Lord Restormel, and, pale as death, said in a low voice, 'What are you going to do, Lady Helena, surely not to join the waltzers? but, forgive me! I affronted you by believing it possible, even for a moment.' I could not deceive such generous confidence; I therefore gave him my hand, and desired him to lead me to a seat, feeling

a little nervous at the possibility there was that when Lord L., who had been called away, should return, he would come and claim me as one who had promised to waltz with him. I was right, for he exclaimed, 'Come, Lady Helena, the waltz is begun!' 'What, then, my lord! I am not going to join it.' 'But, you promised you would.' 'No, not absolutely promised, I am sure; and your wishes deceived you.' 'One's wishes often deceive us, I own,' he replied, with a sigh which he meant to be tender, but only looked affected, 'but, are you in earnest now?' 'Positively, I will not waltz!' He bowed, looked piqued at me, and I thought queerly at Restormel, and taking his brother by the arm, went into another apartment. 'Lady Helena!' said Restormel, 'answer me. If I had not come in when I did, would you not have waltzed with that coxcomb?' 'I am not quite sure, but I think I should.' 'Then it was fear of me, not a principle against the dance itself, that now withheld you?' 'Love

of you, not fear, my lord! I did not like to give you pain; when fear influences my actions, in any thing relating to you, I shall have ceased to love you, for perfect love, you know, casteth out fear.' I was not conscious of the strength of my own words, till I saw their effect on him; but I saw that he forgot every thing, but the assurance from my lips—' guileless lips,' he calls them—that my love for him was perfect, a truth the poor man is often inclined to doubt, and so am I too. But, he is a darling! and I wish I had dukes and princes at my feet, to sacrifice to him! Mem. Do you not think dukes and princes are much obliged to me?"

In reply Lady Aston wrote—" Foolish Helena! Lord Restormel would esteem the sacrifice of one eccentricity, one wrong habit to his wishes, of far more value than the sacrifice of dukes, princes, and marquisses. You are wrong, my dear sister! it is not honourable in an engaged woman, for such you know yourself to be, whatever pretty, prating Mrs. Seebright

may choose to tell your danglers, ever to wish to make conquests, and the motive in you, does not sanction the deed. Is the poor father or mother excused from punishment, who steals a loaf only to save a child from starving? No; and yet the motive is a natural and amiable one. My sweet girl, what is become of your understanding? what guardian of your principles, lost in the whirl of London I suppose; and your principles, for want of this guardian are running riot: pray get out of the whirl as fast as possible."

Lady Helena was self-condemned long before this letter reached her, for Lord L. was going to give a grand ball, at Almack's rooms, and it was known to be given in honour of Lady Helena Fortescue.

This news irritated Lord Restormel so much, that he reproached Lady Helena more justly than discreetly, and demanded her leave to call on the marquis, and tell him that he was her accepted lover; but this permission she dared not give him,

lest a duel should be the result of the meeting, according to the heathenish laws of modern honour.

"Then tell him so yourself."

"What! before he gives me a proper opportunity. Impossible! how indelicate!"

"It is better to act indelicately, than dishonourably, madam! You mean to lead Lord L. on to propose to you, and then to refuse him!"

"Are you sure I mean to refuse him! my lord."

"Distraction! do you put that question to me seriously?"

"Lord Restormel, I may refuse Lord L., but can I, dare I marry a man who is so jealous and so violent as you are?"

"Jealous! I am only jealous of your good name in this case. I would wish you to act as becomes an honourable woman, and if you go to this ball, you are not an honourable woman; and my objection to marry you, would be as great as yours you say is to marry me."

"Do you threaten me, my lord? and do you mean to say that I know not right from wrong, honour from dishonour, as well as yourself? My lord, I will be in no man's leading-strings. I am myself the guardian of my honour, and do not need so insolent a monitor?"

"Lady Helena! Lady Helena! do you remember who says the words you now quote? are her words befitting your pure lips?"

"It was a fair penitent, so called, who spoke them, and so far they suit me; for I shall be one soon, I dare say, but I am not now, so leave me: the longer you stay, the wider the breach will be; but, take notice, I will go to Lord L.'s ball."

Lord Restormel instantly snatched his hat up and departed, closing the door with violence.

Lady Helena had been angry, because she suspected she was wrong; but she could not bear to see how easily Lord Restormel could think her so, and how deeply he resented her rebellion to his

wishes; but she felt as he did, that she ought not to go to Lord L.'s entertainment, and she knew not how to reconcile her offended pride, tenaciousness of her own will, and her sense of duty. At this juncture she received a letter from Fortescue, urging her to come down to them, if it were only for a few days, as he thought Julia grew worse and worse; colder and colder to him she certainly did.

"In short," added he, "to own the truth, I suspect that she repents of her engagement to me, and wishes to break it off; and this prospect, which would have agonized me a few weeks ago, is now not very painful to me—for her coldness does tend to chill my love; but nothing else, believe me, Helena, could have done it." "*A quelque chosè malheur est bon,*" says the proverb, and so Lady Helena found it. Here was an opportunity of avoiding going to the ball, without impropriety, and without seeming to do so in deference to her lover's opinion, or out of regard for his feelings; and thus principle

and pride would both be satisfied. Accordingly, she ordered the carriage and post-horses to come round directly, and instead of going to Mrs. Seebright's, where she was expected, as her father had left London early that morning, she wrote that lady a note to desire her to make her apologies to Lord L. and sent another to Lord Restormel to tell him she was gone to Clifton, and should not return to London, being sick of it and gaiety, and then departed for Clifton to clear up, if possible, the strange, mysterious cause which seemed likely to prevent a union very near her heart, or at least to watch over the declining health of the friend most dear to that heart. But I wonder how soon Restormel will follow me? was a question which she frequently asked herself on the journey, and she sometimes bitterly regretted that she had not condescended to ask to see him before she set off. Though her note, announcing her departure from London, at such a moment, conveyed a balm to the wounded feelings of Lord Restormel, he was excessively

hurt and piqued at her not having desired to see him before she went; and resentment of this proof of indifference, as he thought it, made him resolve, with weakness equal to her own, to delay following her to Clifton, much longer than he needed to have done, and strongly against his inclinations, which made him long to see her, and forget, in a fond welcome, the painful manner in which they last parted. But I must now go back to Julia, and describe what had been passing at Clifton. A short time after her arrival, as she was sitting in a shop, a lady in a widow's dress passed the window; on seeing her Julia started up and ran to the door to look after her, she then wrung her hands together, as if in agony, and fainted away. Lady Erpingham, who was present, saw the swoon, but had witnessed nothing else, as she was making purchases, she therefore only attributed Julia's fainting to encreased weakness, and was glad her poor anxious Marcus had not seen it. But from that moment Julia's spirits were more depress

ed than ever; soon after, as she was with Lady Erpingham, Julia looked out of the window and starting back, grasped her companion's arm convulsively and exclaimed—

"See! see! is not that he? quick, tell me, tell me."

"Yes, it is Marcus certainly, and walking with a widow: but, what then? it is only some messmate's widow I dare say; she is not in handsome mourning: dear me! you are going to faint! shall we stop and ask Marcus to come in?"

"Not for the world, and I hope he does not see us." Nor did he, for he was too much engrossed by his companion: from that moment Julia's manner to her lover grew colder and colder.

"Marcus," said his mother to him that day, but not in the presence of Julia, "we saw you walking with a widow lady this morning; who was it? do I know her?"

"No," he replied in a hurried manner,

" she is an old acquaintance of mine, who is come hither to die I fear, but no one you know."

The truth was this:—As Marcus was one day walking in the country by himself, painfully ruminating on Julia's altered manner, and fancying that the lover in Gloucester-place might have alienated her affections from him, he suddenly, on turning into a lane, met the very woman whose avowed and passionate tenderness he was now only too often contrasting with Julia's coldness, namely, Mrs. Tyrawley herself, and in a widow's dress! He started at seeing her, in evident agitation, and would have passed on; but she, apparently overcome by the suddenness of the meeting, and being too ill and weak from her appearance to bear any surprise, would, he saw, fall to the ground, unless he supported her; and catching her in his arms, she lay pale, motionless, and, he believed, insensible on his bosom while kneeling on one knee; he held her there for some mi-

nutes, vainly endeavouring to revive her. Unconsciously his heart was touched, and re-awakened to former feelings, by this proof what deep emotion his unexpected presence excited in this being, so passionately beloved in the first glow of youthful and unblighted hopes; and as he gazed on that perfect form, and that face which not even sickness and insensibility could rob of its loveliness, he could not help pressing the unresisting beauty to his heart, and imprinting once more a kiss upon those beautiful lips which had so often timidly shrunk from the pressure of his. Mrs. Tyrawley at last thought proper to revive, covered with becoming blushes—nay, something like delirious wandering attended her recovery. She called him her own dear Marcus, beloved in misery, in poverty, and despair, and asked him why he had been away so long? Marcus was terrified, for he thought her senses were gone; but her eye gradually lost its wildness, and exchanged it for a look of such touching tenderness, that he

dared not meet it: and having found that she was quite recovered, he would have taken his leave, but she detained him, and reproachingly asked if he could not spare a few moments longer to a dying and once most dear friend, from the society of the fond and youthful Julia? The woman who spoke looked the fond being whom the youthful Julia was not, and a feeling of resentment towards that innocent girl, led him to stay with more willingness than he would have felt but for the words she used, and which applied so. And, alas! he stayed to hear, that ever since he had fled from her with such apparent abhorrence at the Pavilion, Mrs. Tyrawley had been broken-hearted; that the sight of him had rekindled all her former fires—that her husband had suspected the cause of her dejection—had become jealous, and had never forgiven her, and had made her life wretched. That he had died suddenly, leaving, to the surprise of every one, little property; and that having artfully prevailed on her trustees to lend him the

money settled on her, to vest it in a very advantageous purchase, he had never renewed the settlement, and that she was left with only a hundred a year, which remained of her own fortune, to live upon; and that, worn down by various miseries, she was ordered to Clifton, apparently given over by her physicians. It was natural, and, perhaps, excusable, in a man smarting under the chilling return made to his fondness by one woman, to be flattered and attracted by the avowed attachment of another, and that avowal wrung from an apparently broken heart. He therefore now no longer offered to leave her, on the contrary, he consented to walk further into the country; he even owned that he wished Julia had her warmth of heart and tenderness of nature, and the arm that rested within his, was ever and anon pressed against his side; he did not, however, promise to call on her when they parted, but he found out where she usually walked, and scarcely a day passed but they met in that spot, where the manner of

his first love was a direct contrast to that of his second; at last it became necessary to see her, if it was only to complain to her of Julia's coldness—and then, how soothing was the ill-restrained fondness which shone in Lucy's eyes, and lighted up her pale cheek with its accustomed bloom! At sight of Lucy, looking as she did in former days, something of his former feelings returned, and it was not long before Fortescue, though still the engaged lover of Miss Villeroy, was almost on lover's terms with the beautiful, and, as she said, dying, Mrs. Tyrawley; and this beloved being was poor, destitute, forlorn! and jealousy of him had induced her husband, in revenge, to contrive to leave her as destitute as he could; and for whom was he going to sacrifice this woman? for one who evidently loved him no longer, and whose wealth would soon enable her to procure another lover, if one was not already procured! so thought, so felt Captain Fortescue, and it was soon visible, therefore, to Julia, that his coldness was

become equal to her own ; that he now as much avoided being alone with her as she had avoided being alone with him, and that therefore the crisis of her fate was fast approaching : things were thus circumstanced when Lady Helena came down to Clifton ; her quick eye soon discovered that there was as great a change in her brother's manner to Julia, as in her's to him, though even in both she still saw, at times, looks, stolen looks, which seemed to say that their separation was more forced than natural, and that love still lurked at the bottom of each estranged heart—estranged she knew not why—but Lady Helena was soon so uneasy at Lord Restormel's neither writing to her, nor coming to see her, that even her watchful eye slumbered, and she ceased to importune Julia and her brother, as she had hitherto done, to explain the appearances which surprised her ; time, however, began to hang less heavy on her hands, for Colonel Netherby, her cousin, arrived at Clifton with Mr. and Mrs. Benson, whom Lady Helena had not seen since their flight to

the blacksmith, though Lord Erpingham had met them in London soon after that event, and had taken care of his niece's interest; but as she then no longer wanted a home, he did not feel it necessary, and he certainly did not deem it desirable to invite them to Laurel Grove. On the arrival of the Bensons at a large villa which they took near Clifton, they gave it out, that they meant to keep a sort of open house, and Colonel Netherby, who danced even too well for a gentleman, was busily employed in collecting at his sister's house all the best quadrille and waltz dancers in the vicinity and at the Wells; and amongst the dancers of the former, Lady Helena shone conspicuous; she had often danced waltzes with Netherby in her own family circles but though he pronounced her to be the best waltzer he ever beheld, and he wished her to shew off in the balls which his sister gave; and though, as she loved him dearly, she loved to oblige him—one thought of her lover made her refuse him decidedly, and feel it no hardship to do so; nothing

else would she willingly refuse Colonel Netherby; she walked with him, rode with him, drove out with him, talked with him in preference to dancing with other men, in short, as they were, and seemed much attached to each other, and Netherby was so handsome and so graceful, that he was the "observed of all observers;" it was not long before the Clifton gossips gave the cousins to each other, declaring that they would be the most beautiful couple in Christendom. One of the cousins would have been very glad to realize this prediction, for Netherby had long secretly loved Lady Helena, and as he had lately had a large fortune left him, which, but for his profligacy, would have been left to his father, he could have aspired to her hand without any presumption, had not that hand been promised to another. But where was this lover? strange neglect! could I have so neglected such a creature as you Helena! he used to say; and Lady Helena, on such occasions, betrayed so much mortified feeling that No-

rah used to tell him to take courage, for if he played his cards well he might win the game yet. Such was the state of affairs when Lord Restormel arrived, and he had flattered himself that if he came upon Lady Helena suddenly, her heart would speak in his favour, and that whatever ill will there had remained between them from his sudden departure in anger from her, and her's from London, would all be forgotten in the first moments of unexpected re-union. But Lady Helena had seen him coming from a stair-case window, which overlooked the road, and had therefore time to compose herself, and still the tumultuous and glad beating of her heart. She therefore met him with a degree of calmness, which he was far from being able to imitate, and he was trying to summon up courage to demand a private interview with her when Colonel Netherby entered, and the sort of familiar fondness with which she received him, and led him up to Lord Restormel, declaring he was one of the beings whom she loved best in

the world, had such a painful effect on his before irritated feelings, that he resolved not to demand the conference he before sought, and that if Lady Helena chose to forget his rights as a lover, he would not remind her of them; in the meanwhile, he determined to watch her conduct to this uncommonly handsome man, who was avowedly so dear to her. In the evening Mr. and Mrs. Benson came, and with them, as usual, a fiddle; and Lady Helena, to complete his disgust, appeared in the dancing costume which Mrs. Benson had invented, and insisted that her set should wear. It was a sort of Swiss corset cut very low in the back, and the petticoat was very short and very scant; in short, the whole dress was contrary to Lord Retormel's opinion of what the dress of a gentlewoman should be on all occasions, and he mourned to see Lady Helena give in to follies and improprieties, to which she ought to have risen superior; but his horror encreased when he saw Captain Netherby and Mr. Benson also, equip themselves in a sort of theatri-

cal Swiss costume, and it was with some difficulty that he forbore to affront the latter when he told him he must adopt the same costume, or his Norah would not admit him into her quadrille set. But he could not help saying—"I own I am surprised at what I see, for I thought I was coming to visit ladies and gentlemen, and I find them turned into opera dancers." This speech was, with sundry embellishments, repeated to Lady Helena, and just as her heart was softening towards her unhappy lover, as she gazed on his fine, manly, though perturbed countenance, and she was longing for a complete reconciliation with him: but this communication closed her heart again, and in revenge, she obeyed the usual summons to the waltz, and allowed her cousin to lead her to the circle. She waltzed her best, but it was without pleasure, for her heart was heavy, as that heart reproached her; when she paused for breath, she looked round, but Lord Restormel was gone! and sick to the very soul, Lady Helena sat down, and

danced no more that evening, for her lover returned not, and her night was as sleepless as his. On rising she resolved to send him a conciliatory note, and was going to write it when Lord Restormel was announced, and her heart lightened of its load. She went down to him and found him alone. His manner was calm, but cold; he said he had brought her a letter from his mother, and that he was happy to say, she was rather better for her arrival at Nice. Aston said he writes for himself I find; at any other time this news and a letter from Lady Restormel would have interested Lady Helena beyond measure; but now the estranged terms she was upon with her lover were uppermost in her mind, and tears were in her eyes.

"Why did you leave us so abruptly," said she, "I have scarcely slept all night on account of it?"

"Why did you waltz? I have not slept all night on account of *that* and other things."

"What harm could there be even in

your rigid eyes in my waltzing with my first cousin, the companion of my childhood ? he is like a brother to me."

" True, and he therefore might be your lover—you might marry him."

" True again, but what is that to the purpose ?"

" Every thing."

" Well ! I see no harm in waltzing with Ernest, and I never waltz even with him except in our own circle."

" Waltzing is waltzing, wherever it is performed, and in my opinion equally indelicate everywhere, especially for a woman under under your circumstances—Lady Helena."

" And pray what are my circumstances ?" said Lady Helena, blushing deeply, then with one of her most bewitching smiles, she said—" I had a lover once, but I really believe I have lost him. Do you know where he is Restormel ?"

" In my heart, Helena," he replied, " if you would deign to seek for him there."

"Well then, we are friends again, are we?" cried she, wiping a tear from her eyes, and no questions asked.

"Friends! lovers I trust."

"Aye, so do I, and I declare I am happier than I have been for many days, and now I can read and attend to dearest Lady Restormel's letter; but first, I have news for you—between you and me, and from you I ought to have no secrets, Lord L. has proposed to me, and I said strawberry-leaves and balls avaunt. I am contented with plain balls; now was not that heroic?"

"Naughty girl! how I pity poor Lord L. Lord Erpingham has much to answer for in not having allowed us to marry long ago."

The next evening Lady Helena walked till a late hour with Lord Restormel, and peace seemed quite restored between them. But the night after Mrs. Benson was to give a grand ball, for which she had invented another costume for her own set, and had invited all who chose to come in a fancy dress.

"Only promise me, said Lord Restormel, that you will not wear that

odious costume you wore the other night, at this ball, Helena."

"I do promise, I shall certainly not wear that."

"Nor any, I hope, it is so operatic;—but, to be sure you will not,

"*Ne gagez pas,*" was the reply; and Lord Restormel was hurt, and disappointed. However, Lady Helena tried to prevail on Norah to excuse her coming in costume, but as she was so weak as to shrink from the charge of being afraid of her lover, and dreading to lose him, she resolved to wear it, at all risks, and prove that she was not the slave her cousins thought her. This conference with Norah had given her such a jaundiced view of every thing, that she fancied Lady Restormel's kind letter, which had at first delighted her, was dictatorial, and she resolved that her lover should, himself, obey, and not expect obedience from her to his whims, or she would never marry him, even though she loved him ever so much. Lady Helena sat down to dinner in her morning dress, and Lord Restormel

tried to be cheerful; and while he looked in her face to forget her faults, at the usual hour for going to a ball, Lady Helena sent word down, that she begged the gentlemen to go in the first carriage, and that she would follow with her mother. Julia was gone to bed more than usually ill, but she insisted on Lady Helena's leaving her, and would not allow the Countess to give up chaperoning her daughter. Fortescue, having paid his accustomed visit to Mrs. Tyrawley, was returned, and accompanied the gentlemen; all but Captain Netherby, who stayed to escort the ladies at, as he said, Lady Helena's particular request, and Lord Restormel was too proud to intrude himself where he might not be welcome, he, therefore, went in the first coach. Lady Helena, meanwhile, was busily employed in heightening every excelling beauty which nature had so lavishly bestowed on her, by all that art and the most skilful coquetry could suggest; and the charms of her person were displayed to the

utmost advantage, even at some expense to her delicacy ; and why did Lady Helena do this ? from the hope of fascinating Lord Restormel, and subjugating his senses in spite of his reason and his will : she had heard, she had read of the sovereign, the resistless power of attractive beauty, but she had never yet seen its empire in her own case, for Lord Restormel seemed always to have the use of his judgment and power over his heart, even in his fondest moments, and never to love so impassioned as to blind him for an instant to any error in conduct or sentiment to which she happened to yield ; and this was the devoted and wild homage which Lady Helena sighed for, therefore her lover's adorating mortified her, even when it was at its height. Infatuated girl ! and what would be the admiration and the devotion which she now, therefore, was endeavouring to excite in this noble heart, even if she succeeded in exciting it ? feelings and emotions which the most unprincipled and despicable of the sex, if possessed of consummate beauty, and

displaying meretricious attraction, might equally, perhaps, succeed in inspiring as her spotless, virtuous self. But Lady Helena would have started to hear, what she might with justice have been told, that she herself had in a measure ceased to be virtuous when she wished to inspire in her lover a passion superior to his sense of propriety, and his value for the decorous graces and attire of a modest gentlewoman. But vanity, and the taunts, flatteries, and insinuations of Norah and her brother, had turned her head, as the common expression is, and she was resolved to touch and humble Lord Restormel's heart, through his senses, and bring him bound and obedient to her feet. Perhaps, thought she, I can even prevail on him to waltz with me! then surveying herself, for the last time, in her glittering and captivating costume, with almost agitated pleasure, she descended full of joyful expectation to the drawing-room, received with affectionate delight the praises of her mother on her appearance, tried not to heed the gentle

hints which that mother gave, at the same time that she feared her person was too much exposed, and then bounded into the carriage, going to exhibit in her appearance, to the nicely judging eyes of Lord Restormel, not the dignified daughter of a noble house—the modest virgin, whom he hoped to change into the equally modest wife—the intellectual companion of his dearest hours, and the gifted mother of his chiidren, but a being whose dress and appearance seemed to qualify her to dance in voluptuous graces before a sultan in his seraglio! However displeased Lord Restormel was with Lady Helena, he was restless and impatient till she appeared, and was watching for her entrance; but, notwithstanding, something had diverted his eyes from the door at the moment when she did enter, leaning on the arm of her cousin, whose costume answered hers, but the buz of universal admiration which the graceful couple excited caused him to turn quickly and anxiously round. He did turn, and he beheld Lady Helena! he gazed on her

fixedly, for one short moment, then sighed deeply, turned abruptly away, and retreated to the farthest part of the room, without even giving her a look, or bow of recognition! Lady Helena was disappointed, piqued, mortified; she expected that he would eagerly have approached her, and by his impassioned looks, if not his words, have told her how much he felt the radiance of her beauty, and how eager he was to claim her promise to dance the first dance with him; but she felt, at once, that she had failed, and for ever, in the attempt for which she had been so zealously preparing; she saw her lover was more susceptible of moral disgust, than of female captivation, and she retreated to the seat near her, vexed, provoked, and almost abashed and repentant.

The ball began with a country dance, to which Lady Helena saw, with astonishment, that Mrs. Benson was led by the Marquis of L., whose presence was most unexpected to her, and unwelcome to Norah herself, as she wished her brother

to profit by what she foresaw would happen—a rupture between Lord Restormel and Lady Helena; and not the marquis but Lord L., who had not yet given up his pursuits of Lady Helena, had come down to Clifton on purpose to attend this ball, knowing that a friend of his, who resided near, would gladly introduce him.

Lady Helena's rank required her to stand next her cousin in this dance, but she was obliged to keep her seat, and let her place be occupied. The dance began without her, for Lord Restormel came not to claim her hand.

"Helena! why do you not join the dance?" said Fortescue.

"Because Lord Restormel does not come to lead me to it."

"Where is he? I will go and seek him. Restormel," said he, when he found him, leaning against a pillar, and his eyes half hidden by his hand, "what ails you? Is that an attitude for a ball-room? Helena is expecting you to lead her to the dance."

" Indeed!" he replied, in a tone of bitterness: " where is she? I do not see Lady Helena Fortescue!"

" Then you are blind; why, there she is!"

" What she!" that *prima donna* of a ballet? that Lady Helena Fortescue, the daughter of a noble race, of whom it may be said that, all the men were brave, and all the daughters virtuous?"

A blush of indignation came over the cheek of Fortescue, at the beginning of this severe observation; but it changed to one full of kinder feeling towards his friend at the end of his speech, and casting an enquiring look over his sister, he exclaimed—" You are right, quite right, Restormel, and Helena has disgraced herself."

" Hold!" said the latter, " make my excuses to your sister, and tell her I resign the honour of dancing with her, this evening, to a partner more suited to her."

" I will tell her, depend on it," he replied, hastening to Lady Henlena: he

then whispered in her ear, " Helena, Helena! Restormel declines dancing with you this evening. He is ashamed to dance with you in that indecent opera dance-like dress. I wonder you are not ashamed to wear it. You and Netherby are only fit to dance together! What fools you have made of yourselves! Shame on your dresses!"

" I wonder you are not ashamed of your conduct, Captain Fortescue; look at home, before you censure me," she angrily and bitterly replied. " Hark ye, brother! Mrs. Tyrawley is at Clifton, and you visit her every day, stern moralist!"

Fortescue was thunderstruck, and silenced, while Lady Helena added, " If Lord Restormel will not condescend to dance with me, Netherby will. Here, Ernest, lead me to the dance."

The delighted Netherby gladly obeyed the summons. Lady Helena laughed, flirted, was brilliant! but her heart was sad, her feelings wounded. The first dance was succeeded by a quadrille, and that by

waltz. At first Lady Helena was resolved not to join in the latter, not only because she did not wish further to alienate Lord Restormel, but because she never yet had waltzed, except in private family parties. But, alas! the set now waltzing was not Mrs. Benson's chosen set; it was one of a more mixed description, and composed of persons who were not skilful in the art; and their want of grace in the slow waltz, and of lightness in the *sauteuse* were quite unbearable to the correct taste of Norah and her brother, and not only they, but Lady Helena's own vanity whispered.—"Helena, shew these awkward creatures what good waltzing is."

But still she hesitated, when Lord Restormel passed her without speaking, and looking on her with no complacent expression, went into another room. That was decisive; he had now openly thrown down the signal of hostility, and she was determined to take it up.

"Yes, I will waltz," said she, to the

secretly exultingly Netherby, and he led her to the set. It certainly was the perfection of the art of waltzing, and the consummate beauty as well as grace of the waltzers attracted the attention and elicited the admiration of all who gazed on them. Even the couples who had at first revolved with them in the circle, stood still, at last, to admire what every one else did; when Lord Restormel, restless and unhappy, came into the dancing-room, he saw Lady Helena's cheek flushed with gratified vanity, and her beautiful eye downcast, as if wishing to hide what she felt, gracefully leaning against the encircling arm of the evidently enraptured Netherby, and her hand grasped in his as they flew or glided round the room in quick or slow revolutions. At that moment Lord Restormel experienced that most terrible of all sensations, the fancied hate of love; yes, at that moment he fancied that he hated that Helena, so long adored. But whatever was the feeling of his bosom, it gave him calmness, and taught him self-

control; and while he stood at the door, Lady Helena, tired with her exertions, was led past by him, by her lover. He made way for her, and forcing a smile, said, "I think you must be tired."

Lady Helena, agreeably surprised, yet fluttered at his speaking to her, replied, she knew not what.

"Tired of giving pleasure, my lord," said Netherby, "oh, no, Helena cannot be that, and I think you will own you never saw such waltzing before."

"Really, sir," said Lord Restormel, coldly, "I did not look at it, I was busily engaged in looking at that modest, innocent-looking girl, in slight mourning, who is sitting yonder by her mother, I conclude; who is she, Lady Helena, I must know, she is very pretty and interesting." This was said so naturally, and as if without any intention to pique her self-love, that Lady Helena was surprised and alarmed; she would have preferred the bitterest sarcasm, the severest reproof; and she could not conceal her mortifi-

cation, for she replied hastily, "Yes, she is pretty, and I dare say your lordship wished to add to your eulogy, and she never waltzes."

"I dare say her mother, who looks very discreet, would not allow her."

"Nay, my lord, my mother is equally discreet, no implied censure of her I desire, she hates waltzing, I assure you."

For a moment Lord Restormel looked at Lady Helena, and kindly, as she defended her mother at her own expense, but it was only for a moment. "And yet you waltz," was the severe reply.

Lady Helena only bowed her acquiescence.

"If you bear this, you will bear any thing," whispered Netherby; "let us sit down, if I stay I must quarrel with him."

"Stop! your ladyship has not answered my question," said Lord Restormel, observing her perturbation; "who is that sweet creature?"

"She is an heiress, my lord, and daughter of Lady Dalberry, the lady sitting beside her."

"Lady Dalberry, oh! I must get presented directly," he exclaimed, looking pleased for the first time that evening; "her son, who is in India, was my dear friend both at school and college; but why not go and introduce myself?" He then hastily brushed past Lady Helena, and she saw him with a grace, peculiarly his own, give himself the introduction which he sought; she also saw the blushing joy which glowed in the face of both the mother and daughter as he spoke, and the affectionate pressure with which he grasped the hands tendered to him with flattering readiness. Lady Helena felt a pang at her heart unknown before, but she forced herself to rise superior to such weakness, and just then Lord L. came up to her, and earnestly intreated that he might enjoy the honor and happiness, hitherto so cruelly denied, of waltzing with her. Certainly, was now the hasty and desperate reply, and he led her to the set.

Lord Restormel, though charmed with his new acquaintances, was not unmindful of Lady Helena's movements, and he

beheld her on the arm, and then in the arms of Lord L., of him an avowed lover too, with a feeling which no words can describe. This is decisive! here ends our engagement, and I believe I really hate her now! For the rest of the evening he had no eyes or ears but for Lady Dalberry and her daughter. The latter, though he asked her to dance, had no opportunity of dancing with him, as she was too timid, her mother said, to dance quadrilles, and no more country dances were allowed. "But, indeed, my lord," said the artless girl, "I had much rather sit still, and talk with you about our dear Philip."

With what a kind, approving glance Lord Restormel now beheld her. Lady Dalberry saw it, and was delighted. Lady Helena saw it also, while pausing to take breath, and certainly she was not delighted; but impelled her on again in her course, and she ceased not till she could stand no longer. When supper was announced late, Lord Restormel, with Lady Dalberry on one arm, her daughter on the other,

walked close behind her and the marquis, without noticing her, into the supper-room, then seated himself between his companions.

"How entirely Lord Restormel neglects you and me, Helena," whispered the countess, as the ladies left the table. "Have you quarrelled? I hope not, but he could not approve your waltzing any more than myself."

"If you desire me to waltz no more, I will obey you, mamma;" she replied.

"And him too, I hope, for his objecting is a proof of love, Helena."

Lady Helena sighed, and was silent. The gentlemen did not sit long, and while Lady Helena, chilly, sad, self-reproving and absent, was lounging on a seat, her whole person wrapped up in a large black India shawl, Lord Restormel entered, followed by other gentlemen, with shawls on his arm. As he passed Lady Helena, he smiled, and said—

"I am glad to see you so properly clothed, the night is chilly."

He then went in search of Lady Dalberry and her daughter, and soon returned with them equipped for departing.

"Are you going, Restormel?" said Fortescue.

"Yes; I am going to conduct these ladies to their carriage, and shall return no more. I am no dancer you know."

"You breakfast with us to-morrow, I conclude?"

"No, I am to have the honour of breakfasting with Lady Dalberry, and then—"

Here his voice faltered; he said no more, for he had not courage to say, "and then I return for London."

Lady Helena overheard the conversation with a sickness at her heart, which made every object swim around her, and now she haughtily threw aside "the proper clothing" which Lord Restormel had presumed to command, and then she fondly wrapped it round her because he had commended it. But whatever feeling predominated, the pleasure of the evening

was gone, nor could she be prevailed upon to waltz or dance again; but she, too, retired earlier than the rest of the party did, and pronouncing, in her inmost soul, that the ball had been to her, on the whole, spite of the general admiration she had excited, all "vanity and vexation of spirit."

## CHAP. XXII.

To Lord Restormel, that evening had been the destroyer of every prospect most dear to his heart; for to think of marrying Lady Helena, after she had given such convincing proofs how little she valued his opinion, or considered his feelings, was impossible, and he determined, as the house was up, to quit England directly, and join his mother at Nice. With this determination he went to bed, and fell into a perturbed sleep, from which he very soon awoke. And oh! what a change had that sleep made in his feelings! There irritation had subsided, and in his dreams he had beheld Lady Helena as in the happiest days of their courtship. The sight had softened his heart towards her, and while he reflected on his own conduct of the preceding evening, he could not help suspecting that he had treated her with un-

becoming neglect, and that her conduct might in some measure be prompted by a wish to retaliate; he therefore determined to write a conciliating note to her, and if she answered it, and answered it kindly, he would hasten to her, and endeavour to heal the breach which their respective folly had occasioned. He then fell asleep again, but the noise in the hotel, as well as the anxiety of his mind, did not allow him to sleep long, and he rose to write to Lady Helena. Many notes were written and torn, but by the time that he was to go to Lady Dalberry's lodgings, he had pretty well satisfied himself; but as he had sent his own man to Bath on business, he was obliged to send the note by one of the waiters, charging him to go with it immediately, and deliver it to Lady Helena Fortescue's own maid. The man promised obedience, and he set off for Lady Dalberry's. But no sooner was he gone, than the waiter gave the note to another waiter to deliver, who went to a public-house in his way, who in his cups threw

the letter by mistake into the fire, and had only just sense enough left to go back to his employer and tell him what he had done. The waiter, conscious of having neglected his duty, and unwilling to lose the money which he was sure of receiving from Lord Restormel if he concealed what had happened, resolved to do so. Lord Restormel left his new friends as early as he could do so with civility, and returned to his inn to enquire for an answer to his letter, but none had arrived; and as he had said in it that if he did not receive an answer in a few hours he should conclude that Lady Helena intended that all should be at an end between them, he was not a little distressed when he found no answer had arrived. Two more long hours passed, and still no answer; he then desired to see the waiter, and the usual questions took place.

"But are you sure you carried the letter yourself?"

"Quite sure."

"And that you saw Lady Helena's own maid and gave it to her?"

" Quite sure, my lord."

" Then you know her ?"

" Perfectly, your lordship ; a tallish, thin, tight-laced, light-eyed woman, and has a bent finger."

" The same ; I see you know her—you may go."

There could then be no doubt of the safe delivery of the letter ! but he would wait till evening. For some time he wondered that he had not received a visit from Fortescue, but he, at last, recollected that he was to go out that day with Mr. Benson and Netherby to look at an estate which had been offered to the latter ; still he wondered that Lady Erpingham had not sent to invite him to dinner, but how could she if Lady Helena had resolved to break with him entirely. Thus passed away several miserable hours, day closed in, and night came, and no letter from Lady Helena ! perhaps she was ill, too ill to write ; he, therefore, inquired if Lady Helena Fortescue and Miss Villeroy had been past that day.

"Lady Helena, sir, but not Miss Villeroy; Lady Helena went past about three o'clock, my lord, and on horseback, with a gentleman and a lady attending her, the Honourable Mrs. Benson, I believe, and then the Marquis of L."

Then, that hope had failed, and he went to bed endeavouring to repay scorn with scorn, and again believing that he ought to hate, and did hate Lady Helena. In the morning, though his night was sleepless, it was comparatively quiet, for his mind was made up, and one of the worst of all states is a state of indecision. After breakfast he delayed still to write his final farewell; but no letter arrived, and he hesitated no longer; he then ordered horses to his carriage, and in a state of feeling which he could not exactly define to himself, he set off on his return to London. His letter was as follows:—

"All is then decided, and we meet no more! I am going off to Nice directly; and as every tie is now broken which bound me to England—broken, I beg leave to add, with the fullest approbation of my

judgment, I shall not return till duty, or painful necessity obliges me to do so. Farewell! I earnestly wish you every possible happiness with a husband more suited to you than I am.

"I am, your ladyship's

"obedient humble servant,

"RESTORMEL."

The waiter took care to deliver this letter in person, therefore the important letter, the one on which the happiness of two persons depended was not delivered, and that calculated to ensure to them hours of sorrow, was delivered only too punctually!—on what slight incidents sometimes depends the happiness or misery of a life. Lady Helena had stayed at home the whole of the morning after the ball, till three o'clock, expecting to hear from or see Lord Restormel! but as he neither came nor sent, and she was ashamed of owning why she stayed within, she was prevailed upon to take a ride as she had a very bad head-ache, the result of heart-ache and a sleepless night. She returned, hoping to find that Lord Restormel had

called during her absence, and was painfully disappointed ; but, the next morning, before she had quitted her room, the fatal, final note was put into her hands, and as there was no allusion in it to his first letter, Lady Helena could only think this was all which his heart had dictated, and that he was indeed lost to her and her hopes for ever! It was well for her that she was alone, for she gave way to such a delirium of hopeless agony, when she found that her folly had broken a tie so dear, on reflection to all her best and tenderest feelings, as she would not on any consideration have had beheld by any earthly being ; it was only by deep and humble supplication to that heaveny Being, whom in the thoughtless gaiety and pride of her heart, she had but too much forgotten, that she could obtain strength to support this overwhelming blow, or to bear the affectionate regrets of her mother and Julia, when she gave Lord Restormel's farewell into their hands.

" However," said the countess, " I am

sure all is for the best, and you both have done wisely, for I dare say you would not have been happy together."

"Lady Helen sighed and shook her head; for, with her conduct, she was very sure that wisdom had nothing to do, and that it was all on Lord Restormel's side. But, alas! cried she, "how well does his dear mother know him. How truly did she say that I should find him less indulgent than herself!" As soon as Lord Restormel reached London, he wrote as follows to Lord Erpingham:—

"My Dear Lord,

"Truly sorry am I to be obliged to inform you, that circumstances have led Lady Helena and myself to consider ourselves as betrothed lovers no longer; like a truly honourable woman, she convinced me that such was her wish, as soon as it was known to herself, and for this ingenuousness, I cordially thank her.

"I am, my dear lord,

"Your's, most truly,

"Restormel."

"P.S.—You will be sorry to hear that, by to-day's post, I learn that my mother is worse—I am, therefore, going off for Dover instantly."

Having dispatched this letter, he hastened his preparations for his departure, and with a desperate calmness of feeling, which looked like indifference, he began his melancholy journey—a journey, at the end of which he could look forward with nothing but dismay,—as the misery of seeing the only being expire whom he now most loved on earth, in all probability, too certainly awaited him! But Lord Restormel was a believer, and the reliance of the Christian enabled him to support the sorrows of the man. Those who are actively and habitually benevolent, have this marked advantage amongst others over the rest of their species in times of affliction, and that is, a power of forgetting themselves in the joys or sorrows of those whom they love, and of going out of themselves to rejoice or mourn with them. This truth was made manifest

in Lady Helena's experience; her habitual and active benevolence was, luckily for her, called to powerful and necessary exertion, by the situation of the close, reserved, and suffering Julia.

Marcus returned from his short tour on the evening of the day on which Lord Restormel departed; but he left the family party very early, and went to Clifton, where he lodged, on pretence of having a bad head-ache. The news of the rupture between his friend and his sister did certainly not tend to raise his spirits, and he was so out of humour with all the world, because not satisfied with himself, that he was almost sorry Lady Helena's self-blame deprived him of all excuse to follow Lord Restormel, and demand satisfaction for her injuries. But he did not venture to echo Lady Helena's severe censure of herself; he dared not, lest she should retaliate as she had done before; and he shrunk from the severity which he could not but feel that he merited. But, before his departure, Julia, so full of emotion,

that she would have appeared calm and indifferent, except to the quick-sighted eye of anxious and observant friendship or love, timidly approached him, and said, in a low voice—" Captain Fortescue, I wish you would come hither before the breakfast hour to-morrow, as I wish to speak to you alone."

" Can you not speak to me now?" said he, hastily, and turning very pale.

" No, not now; I am not well enough; good night! God bless you!" she replied, hastily withdrawing herself from his detaining hand. But, why did he detain her with that fond and earnest grasp? There is no accounting for the caprices of feeling; for he whose heart at the moment beat tenderly at sound of that faltering voice and those beautiful though averted eyes, was in a few moments more in the presence of her rival, and enjoying the unrestrained fondness of her well-acted welcome.

" Julia! what is the matter with you to-night?" cried Lady Helena, whom no cares of her own could long render un-

mindful of others? "You are more than usually depressed and agitated! How cruel! how very cruel is this reserve! and to me too, who have no reserves to you, but tell you all my secrets and my weaknesses."

"Have patience with me—I shall be better to morrow! much better; and then —yes; one day, perhaps, you shall know all. But good night now; I think if I go to bed I shall sleep."

"As she spoke, her feet tottered; she fell into Lady Helena's arms, and was carried to bed too weak even to sit up for a moment, but perfectly conscious to all that was passing. Lady Helena and the countess were so much alarmed, that they sent for their physician, who, as usual, declared that Julia's disorder was wholly on the spirits, and that her present state proceeded from nervous weakness."

"Be that as it may," said Lady Helena when he was gone, "I will not leave the dear girl to-night." Nor did she leave her

till, at day break, she had read her into a tranquil slumber.

"She suffers," said Lady Helena to herself, "and the worst of all pangs, those of jealousy; but still she is enviable, she has not, like me, brought her sufferings on herself, but is afflicted through the faults of others. Oh, Julia, how I envy you!" The next day, though Marcus was true to her appointment, Julia was not, for she slept beyond the appointed hour. However, when she awoke she insisted on rising, and Lady Helena allowed her to do so.

"Now, then," said Julia, "tell Captain Fortescue that I wish to see him in the dining-parlour." Lady Helena delivered the message, led the trembling girl to the place of meeting, and left her alone with her brother. It was some minutes before Julia, whose tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of her mouth, could articulate what she came to speak. But, as if a power superior to herself enabled her to perform her painful task, she was at length able to

say---" Is it, indeed, true, Captain Fortescue, not only that Mrs. Tyrawley is at Clifton, but that you visit her every day?"

" Who could tell you this? did Helena?"

" Oh! no, she was too kind to do so—no matter who told me; but, is it a fact or not?"

" It is a fact, for your coldness during such a length of time, has really so chilled my affection, and so convinced me that your's for me is——"

" It is enough," replied Julia, coldly and proudly interrupting him, " I have now heard what I wished to hear, and in reply, I beg leave to say, that you must henceforth consider our engagement as at an end for ever. I resign my claims to you, and earnestly, heartily wish you to be happy with Mrs. Tyrawley!" She then left the room before Fortescue could recover his surprise, and I may add, the shock of what she said. Then he was free! and at liberty to marry Mrs. Tyrawley; he had lately sometimes wished to be

so. Then, now that he was so, why did he not feel happy and elated? was it that Julia was really dearer to his heart than the woman he had first loved! He feared to analyze his feelings, for should he find that he loved Julia best, he must humbly sue to be received again into favour, and again at that his pride at present rebelled. Lady Helena now hastily ran into the room, exclaiming----" Do tell me, Marcus, what has passed between you and Julia? She fainted away as soon as she left you, and is only now recovering."

" But she is recovering?"

" Yes."

" Then tell her I beg, I entreat to see her again," he replied, with great and glad emotion, for he believed that she resigned him merely through woman's pique and jealousy, and that she would repent and forgive him. But he solicited an interview in vain.

" Helena," said Julia, firmly and calmly, " this swoon will be the last proof of weakness, which on this subject you will

ever see in me. Tell Captain Fortescue that I have not lightly and inconsiderately resigned him, but from a deep conviction that I should be miserable if I married him, for I should have no confidence in his affection."

"Resigned him! have you resigned him? oh! poor, lost Marcus! then he will be Mrs. Tyrawley's!"

"To be sure he will, I have given him to her. I have wished him happy with her, and from my heart."

"Oh! Julia! what have you done?" cried Lady Helena, bursting into tears; "you have made me more wretched than I was, and that was needless, and you have enabled Marcus to break all our hearts and his own too, if he marries that woman!" But Julia remained firm, and Lady Helena was forced to go to Marcus, and relate all she had said.

"It is enough," replied he, proudly, "I will condescend to supplicate no woman. I am glad she knows her own mind at last, and I know mine!—good morning!"

Lady Helena would fain have detained him to remonstrate with him, but he would not listen to her, and he left the house in excessive anger and perturbation, and also wondering how Julia could have been so well informed of his movements. He instantly repaired to Mrs. Tyrawley, who gave way to a violent expression of delight, which she modestly pretended to check, when she heard that his engagement was at an end."

"Oh, Marcus," cried she, fondly leaning on his shoulder; "then I shall at least be spared the agonizing pang of envy, and you will not be another's."

He could not, as she expected he would say, "No, and I will be your's!" for the time was not yet come, nor would it ever, she feared, unless she contrived to hasten it. Accordingly she told him now what she said she would never have told him if this rupture had not happened, namely, that Julia was said to have long repented her engagement to him, as she had conceived an attachment to a very

charming man, a relation of Lady Villeroy's; and as she saw that Fortescue writhed under this intelligence, exclaiming, when she had ended, "I believe it, I believe it, on my soul!" She went on to invent a number of corroborative circumstances, which maddened him so much, that, spite of her blandishments, he rushed from the house, meaning to go and reproach the innocent Julia; but he thought better of it, and returned to his own apartments to compose his mind, and soothe his irritated feelings.

The next day pride was the predominant sensation, and he tried to feel happy in the recovered power of marrying the first idol of his youthful heart, and rendering her happy, while with pleased alacrity he repaired to her lodgings. But she was too ill to see him; a note from her, however, was given him in which she said, that his cruelty in leaving her as he did had brought on all her worst symptoms, and she could not see him then; but if she

grew worse she hoped he would allow her the happiness of dying in his arms.

Terrible was the day which Fortescue passed after reading this note—Julia false, and Lucy dying!—He mounted his horse instantly and rode about the country all the day like a madman, only returning every hour to Clifton to enquire how Lucy did.

The next day she owned herself better, and dressed in most becoming night-clothes, received his visit, in the presence of her maid, in her bed. She told him that she felt she had not long to live, and was thankful that what remained to her of life would be spent with him, for she said, she disregarded the cruel reports to which their renewed intimacy had given rise, and thought his presence was a full equivalent for loss of reputation, as she knew her own innocence.

Fortescue's generous nature was shocked to find that her fame was injured by his visits, and he found that he must

in justice and in honor save her reputation, even against her will, and not take advantage of the blindness which the intoxication of love threw over her eyes to indulge himself in an intercourse which was, in the eyes of the world, injurious to her. He must, therefore, he saw, cease to visit her, or make her his wife.

It is easy to conclude which alternative he preferred; her beauty, her softness, her passionate attachment to himself, together with the pity which her ill health, endangered life, and destitute situation excited, made him resolve to marry her. But as soon as he had offered, and been accepted, he left Clifton for the house of a friend near Reading, determined not to return thither till he came to receive the hand of Lucy, as he wished to avoid seeing any of his family, since he knew that he could without much pain defy their letters of expostulation and entreaty, but not their personal solicitations, not to marry Mrs. Tyrawley. He did not, however, make

known his intention to marry her till the day was fixed.

He then wrote to his father, who was visiting a dying friend in Suffolk, and to Lady Helena, to desire her to break his intentions to his mother. To Julia he also wrote, telling her he did not mean to upbraid with her falsehood, an the contrary, he wished to bless it, as it had enabled him to do justice to the only woman who ever truly and faithfully loved him, and that he thanked her for having resigned him when she did. As Julia expected this event, she was tolerably well prepared for it, and the now recovered calmness of her manner was not at all disturbed. Not so Lady Helena and her mother! they suffered dreadfully, but at length, after writing repeated letters, and making fruitless attempts to see Fortescue, they were obliged to submit quietly to this painful stroke, especially as the earl, who had more power over his son than any one, was unable to leave his friend, and try to expostulate with him in person.

"Yet after all, what could we say, and why should we object?" said the countess at last: "Marcus is convinced Mrs. Tyrawley is a virtuous woman, or he would not marry her. The world is very scandalous, therefore she may always have been virtuous, especially as she has always loved Marcus you hear, and such an attachment is a great shield to the honour of a woman."

"She says she always loved Marcus!" said Lady Helena.

"Well, my dear child, and why should we not believe her? She may be, after all, a very respectable woman, nay, I dare say she is a very respectable woman, and, with your father's approbation, I shall receive her as soon as she is the wife of my son."

Lady Helena smiled mournfully at her mother's consistency of feeling and character, and went in search of Julia, to whom she imparted what had passed, and who instantly saw, that as she must not expose herself to association with Fortescue till

she had conquered her attachment to him, she must choose a guardian and another residence as soon as possible, till she had an opportunity of joining Lord and Lady Aston abroad. Julia answered Fortescue's letter the day after she received it, and the misery which she endured while writing it, convinced her that her peace of mind could only be restored by an entire cessation of intercourse between them. It was with an anxious heart that Fortescue expected, and with a beating one that he opened, the letter of Julia, which, by some accident, he did not receive till on the eve of his wedding-day, and when he was trying to recal those feelings of ardent love which he had once felt towards Mrs. Tyrawley, and which he expected to feel, whenever he should lead her to the altar. But it was impossible, she was no longer the woman he once adored. She had been the property of another man, she had—no matter what the motive was—sold herself as it were for wealth, and he also knew that the breath of scandal had not spared

her fame. Nay, was her conduct towards himself absolutely correct? Ought she to have received his visits as she did, when she knew him to be the engaged lover of another? But then, he remembered, on the other hand, her beauty, her attractions, and her tenderness, and he at last worked himself up to believe that he should feel more like an impatient lover the next day, especially as she loved him, and Julia did not. But Julia's letter caused another revulsion of feeling, for she wrote thus:—"I know not what you mean by my 'falsehood,' as you must know my 'falsehood,' as you call it, was only the result of yours, and with yours I have been long, very long acquainted, though I dared not tell you, for reasons which even now I cannot give. But believe me, I never blamed, I only pitied you, for I know, by my own feelings, the resistless and unalterable power of a first and early attachment; I therefore readily understood and felt for your's. I felt that I could never love any other man than yourself, even if

time, absence, and, above all, supplication to the power who has afflicted me, should enable me to rise superior to my love for you. But should they not, I trust that I shall not live long, for now I have lost you, what have I to live for? No, dear Fortescue, as I venture to call you for the last time, not even the happy woman for whom I am forsaken, loves you better, or more faithfully than I do. But I almost blush to own this, as you will so soon be the husband of another! Yet I cannot endure that you should accuse me, or think me guilty of falsehood. I wonder that I can bear to write this; but see, a tear has nearly blotted out the words 'husband of another!' How weakly I delay to bid you adieu! and sign myself to you, for the last time, and with the truest wishes for your happiness,

your affectionate

JULIA VILLEROY.

It was with sensations almost amounting to frenzy, that Fortescue read this. Julia still loving him and never having

ceased to love him; Julia never able, probably, to conquer her attachment! what then could make her so strangely cold to him? and what could she mean by having long been aware of his falsehood? his falsehood had been of a very recent date; was it possible that treachery had been at work to separate them? but who could have a motive to do so? who was the man that made love to Julia? and could Lucy? but it was wicked to suspect her, and the lover was the person who had done the mischief if any was done: but how could he know? how enquire? it was too late to demand an audience of Julia, and he must now keep the promise he had made and marry Lucy: he could not, however, but think he had been too precipitate; then the next moment, with something of Lady Helena's generosity, he comforted himself with the idea that he should derive happiness from making another happy, and that, in the faithful tenderness of his wife, he should lose all regret for the loss of the affectionate but mysterious Julia. The

next day, notwithstanding, rose only too soon for Fortescue, and he almost trembled when he recollected, what solemn and binding vows he was about to make—vows certainly destructive to the peace of one beloved being—vows hateful to his parents and his sister, and if he were weak enough to mind forebodings, vows as likely to ensure his own misery, as his own happiness. But it was too late to go back, he therefore dressed, ordered his horse to come round, and was preparing to go and conduct his bride to church, when a man, whose horse was covered with foam, rode up to the house at full gallop. Fortescue's friend, who was to have accompanied him to the altar, though he disapproved of his choice, came instantly running up to him, with a small parcel in his hand, on which was written, 'For Captain Fortescue, to be delivered and opened immediately; and to be sent to him wherever he is.' Fortescue eagerly broke the seal, and beheld with sensations, impossible to describe, the astonishing contents. But I must now take as

brief a review as I can of what had been passing in Gloucester Place, at the house of Lady Villeroy: Aubrey, the relation, and intended husband of the infatuated Lady Villeroy, was the man so long adored by the equally infatuated Mrs. Tyrawley: he was and he always had been the arbiter of her fate; she had loved him, and him only, from the first dawn of her youth, and though with a passion unreturned, except by avowed scorn and contempt for her weakness, she had continued to love him, as I have before stated; she had, in early youth, sacrificed nearly all her little fortune to pay his debts, and had contracted debts herself for him, and it was jealousy of him, not of Fortescue, which had led her husband to leave her destitute; for they had met Aubrey abroad while he was living there with a mistress, and the devoted Lucy could neither control nor conceal her misery and her jealousy. Mr. Tyrawley died not long before Sir George Villeroy, and just as Aubrey had resigned his frail companion to another, and was awaiting Lady Villeroy's summons

to England, Lucy wrote to tell him she was a widow : his reply was " Well, what then ? I will never marry you, but I advise you to try and regain Fortescue ; I have, by means of my cousin Mansfeldt, who has a mind to the heiress himself, contrived to give Miss Villeroy suspicions of her lover's being still devoted to you, and wishing to marry her only from interested motives, and because he has promised to marry her. I will tell you more when we meet, and remember I am poor and Fortescue rich." It was indeed true that Julia had received anonymous letters, which she was desired to name to no one, because Fortescue would suspect who wrote them, and might endanger his own life and that of the writer, whose only motive was to save Miss Villeroy from a marriage unworthy of her, as he had a great regard for the memory of her angel mother. Had Julia known more of the world, she would, regardless of the pretended consequences, have shewn these letters to Fortescue, or at least to his sister or Sophia ; but her youth and inexperience made her an easy

prey to these designing persons, and the reserve of her nature completed their success. Mansfeldt had deceived Aubrey as to his motives; no persons like to own a base motive when they can assume a good one, and Mansfeldt chose to impute to love the conduct which was, he knew, instigated by hate, as well as by the wish to prevent Fortescue's marriage with a woman who he knew disliked him; nor could Aubrey, however inclined he might be to doubt Mansfeldt's word on some occasions, be slow to believe that he loved a beautiful girl of eighteen, and wished therefore to prevent her marrying a rival. On the death of Sir George Villeroy, the three confederates extended their plans of operations, and as it was soon known in the neighbourhood that Miss Villeroy would want a waiting-maid, they contrived to introduce a tool of their own, who, after Julia's removal from Gloucester Place, was always acquainted with the hour at which an anonymous letter would arrive by the twopenny-post, and was there-

fore in the way to receive it, and convey it unseen by any of the family to Julia, as they well knew that if Lady Helena had seen twopenny-post letters frequently arriving directed to her friend, she would have enquired who her correspondent was. To complete her distrust of Fortescue, Julia was informed that, at such an hour, he would be walking in Dorset Street with a tall lady in weeds, and that that lady would be Mrs. Tyrawley, who was recently become a widow; and as Julia's dressing-closet looked into Dorset Street, she might, with her own eyes, the writer said, convince herself that her anonymous friend told the truth. Accordingly, in his way from his lodgings to Gloucester Place, Fortescue, as usual, went through Dorset Street; when, just before he reached the above-mentioned window, he was accosted by a tall lady in weeds, who told him she was the widow of a lieutenant who had once served under him, and begged to know if he could do any thing for a son of his who wished to enter the service.

Fortescue walked up Dorset Street, consequently listening to this tale, which was told by a woman dressed for the purpose, and he did so in sight of the deceived and wretched Julia; yet further, when Julia was ordered to quit London by the physicians, she was informed that Fortescue would certainly propose that she should go to Clifton, because Mrs. Tyrawley was going thither by order of her physicians, and as Fortescue did urge her to go thither in preference to any other place of the kind, because he had a friend residing in the neighbourhood, her confidence in her anonymous correspondent was fatally confirmed; but, alas! it was strengthened still more when she saw the real Mrs. Tyrawley pass the shop where she was sitting, that is, she saw a tall lady in black, who looked like the one she had seen in London, and the confederates had taken care to employ a woman on that occasion, who in height and figure resembled Mrs. Tyrawley! no wonder, therefore, that the poor Julia was com-

pletely deceived, and that her spirits and her health yielded to the pressure of secret anxious suffering, which she could not, dared not, reveal to any one, especially as her true and generous love made her shrink from exposing the error of Fortescue, even to Sophia. But Aubrey's motives were changed when he beheld and become acquainted with Julia. Before, he had laboured to prevent her union with her lover, merely that his slave, Mrs. Tyrawley, might regain Fortescue to herself, and he, as usual, receive pecuniary aid from her, while Mansfield would have a chance for winning the heiress; but when he saw youth, beauty, purity, and wealth united, in the unsuspecting victim of his arts, a feeling of virtuous attachment, such as he had never experienced before, took possession of his heart: he loathed the golden fetters, which Lady Villeroy, he saw, meant to impose on him, and he resolved to exert on Julia those powers of captivation which he had hitherto found resistless to other women. But, blinded

by vanity, and led by his impetuous passions, he made a premature discovery of his love, and the result I need not repeat: he still persevered, though he in the meanwhile allowed Lady Villeroy to look forward with certainty to be his wife, when the first year of her mourning should expire; and that Mrs. Tyrawley might not be jealous of Julia, he told her if he ever married, he would marry Lady Villeroy. But these wicked conspirers against the peace of innocence, were not allowed to triumph, ultimately, in their wickedness; for Lady Villeroy was enabled to detect and expose them. Aubrey had been for some days so unwell that he was forced to keep his room and have advice. One afternoon, while busy in arranging a cabinet of letters and trinkets, an anodyne, which he had unconsciously taken, operated so powerfully that he fell back in his chair in a deep sleep. At this moment Lady Villeroy entered the room; seeing him in this situation, she started forward to ascertain whether he was in a

swoon or a slumber; and having convinced herself he was only in the latter, she had sat down to watch beside him, when her eye rested on a letter, dated the preceding day, and written in a woman's hand, signed "the fond and faithful Lucy Tyrawley:" she instantly snatched it up, and read with horror and fierce indignation, the following lines:—

"*Clifton.*

"Cruel, arbitrary, but ever most dear and only beloved Aubrey! I have for your sake made a complete dupe of that fond fool Fortescue! That Miss V.'s coldness mortified his vanity, and my ardour gratified it so much, that I should soon be sure of him, I told you before. I have now to tell you that the poor girl, being entirely convinced that our anonymous letters told her the truth months ago, and that Fortescue was bound to her only by honor and avarice, and to me by love, broke with him suddenly, and kindly desired him to marry me. I took advantage of this, when he related it to me, feigned to be near

dying a feint which real illness assisted, and the consequence has been, that the day after to-morrow I shall be his wife! But, oh! I am very wretched! for I hear, no matter from whom, that you love Miss Villeroy! I shall not be very jealous, if you marry that old miserly tigress, Lady Villeroy, though you tell me you loath her, and are only making a fool of her; but, mark me, sir, if you dare to make love to Julia, I will, at all risks to myself, expose you to her in your true colours. Julia your wife!—the idea drives me mad! I earnestly wish you would tie yourself, instantly, (however odious she is to you) to that doting old woman, who is, you say, so nauseously fond of you. Farewell! I must write a tender note to Fortescue, after all, he is a fine, handsome creature!—and I wonder I do not love him passionately, perhaps, I shall one day. I wish I could make you jealous! but, oh! he is not, he never can be *you* in my eyes—you, beloved by me from earliest youth! and still the only being, as you well know, whom I

ever did, or ever can love! On you I lavished my little wealth; for you I cheerfully injured my reputation; and with you I would now gladly fly to the end of the world! and what have you uniformly given me in return for this self-devotion? Your cold contempt, barbarian! But I must, to oblige you more than myself, complete my work, and give myself again to another."

It was with great difficulty that Lady Villeroy could contain herself, and forbear to vent her indignation in loud reproaches, while reading this letter; but, cunning, the result of her wish for revenge, and perhaps better feelings, a wish to do justice to Fortescue and Julia, taught her forbearance, and she left the room softly, taking the letter of Lucy with her. This letter, she instantly sent off by an express to Clifton, charging him to find Fortescue, wherever he was, and give the packet into his own hand: a feeling of jealousy unconsciously, perhaps, prompted this resolution; for, if Julia was once Fortescue's, she never would be Aubrey's. She enclosed the letter in the following one.

Sir—" Read the enclosed, and thank heaven and me for your escape, for I trust these will reach you time enough to prevent your marrying that vile woman, and give you back to poor Julia, to whom my love. I send this by an express. Pray pay all charges.

" Your servant,

" Elizabeth Villeroy."

These were the letters delivered to Captain Fortescue on the morning of the day designed for his marriage. There are few feelings of agony in the catalogue of human miseries so bitter, for the moment at least, as the sudden conviction forced with irresistible clearness on the mind, of the utter worthlessness of the object of a long and tender attachment! Fortescue at first reeled and staggered under the blow thus inflicted on him, and felt contempt as great as his once adored Lucy expressed for the fond weakness and baby vanity which had made him her easy dupe. But the next moment his soul seemed almost bursting with gratitude to

heaven for the mercy vouchsafed him! and while he sunk devoutly on his knees, his brave and manly heart was not ashamed to vent its thankfulness in tears, which streamed from his uplifted eye over his clasped hands, and hung upon his quivering lip! That duty over, he desired his servant to pay the express whatever he demanded; and then, throwing himself into the carriage designed to convey him and his bride to the altar, he desired to be driven to Mrs. Tyrawley's lodgings. On the way thither, he remembered, with remorseful tenderness, how often he had complained of Julia's coldness, a coldness now so well accounted for, a coldness which did not as he now found proceed from her heart, and he longed to throw himself at her feet, and renew there every vow of the most ardent love! for in proportion as Lucy fell in his esteem for ever, the injured and virtuous Julia rose with bright and added beauty! Still, spite of his injuries, Fortescue trembled to behold that being once so dear, who would

soon be forced to shrink humbled and abashed before the terror of his reproaching eye. Lucy, herself, was not without her painful feelings; she had her compunctious visitings, and she had also jealous fears that Julia might be induced to love and marry Aubrey, as she believed him capable of winning the affections of any woman. If so, thought she, I shall have deceived the noble Fortescue, only to make myself a greater wretch than ever, for Aubrey will be rich, and rich independent of me and my fond aid! But it was too late to retreat, and pale and ill assured she awaited the arrival of Fortescue! He came, he rapidly mounted the stairs, and forcing a smile, she advanced to meet him, assuming as she did so, an air of timid bashfulness. This artful seeming steeled his heart, and fixing his fine eyes upon her, he said, opening her letter at the same time—"Mrs. Tyrawley, do you know that hand-writing?" She looked, she recognised it, and sunk nearly fainting into a chair; Fortescue rung for assistance, then coldly

said—" I am now going to that injured angel! Farewell! farewell for ever!"

" There is still one comfort!" cried Lucy, after he was gone, " he will be reconciled to Miss Villeroy, and she will never be Aubrey's."

While these events were passing, Lord Erpingham arrived at Clifton, and with a heavy heart—for what awaited him there was not likely to afford comfort to him in any way; as he knew that his son was on the eve of forming a marriage, which he detested, after having, as he feared, endured Miss Villeroy to break her engagement to him; and his daughter had also separated herself from the lover under whose honorable protection he had hoped to see her placed; moreover, he feared that he should on inquiry find the fault of the rupture was more on Lady Helena's side, rather than on Lord Restormel's

" Never, Augustus, did I return to you so reluctantly as now," said the earl, " for never before were my paternal pride and comfort so entirely over-clouded before. I

do not ask you where Marcus is, he is, I doubt not, with that odious woman."

"I hope not odious, my dear lord; I dare say she has been much slandered, and Marcus respects as well as loves her, or he would not marry her."

"Kind and candid as usual," he replied, "but where is Helena? how is she."

"She is at-home, dreading, I believe, to see you, and as usual blaming herself."

"So, so, then it is as I suspected, but let me see her directly." Lady Helena came, and with such a countenance of habitual woe, as her father could not behold unmoved; kissing her pale cheek with affectionate warmth, he gazed earnestly and anxiously in her face, and seating her on his knee, allowed the overcharged heart of his child to unload itself in tears on his shoulder.

"Oh! this is so kind," said the sobbing girl at last! "and I merit only reproaches!"

"I wish to judge for myself," replied

her father kindly, "and I know you 'will a plain, unvarnished tale deliver,' Helena not at all sparing yourself: come, tell me all that has happened." Lady Helena, did so, and Lord Erpingham, who was indeed a just and honorable man, declared that he could not blame Lord Restormel for his severity of reproof to a young woman, who not only wore a costume unbecoming her rank in life, but wholly in opposition to the wishes of her lover, and I doubt not, said he, to those of her mother. His resentment was honorable to himself, but what I doubt is, whether the provocation was sufficient to justify his leaving you as he has done, without sending you any other notice than this cold, heartless note. Had he loved you as a man ought to love the woman he marries, he could not have left you without a more feeling farewell. Alas! little did the earl or Lady Helena think that a letter, a touching letter had been written by Lord Restormel, and just such an one as Lady Helena and her father would both have cordially delighted in, and

which would, had it been received, have rivetted the union which the note had broken! As it was, Lady Helena could not acquit Lord Restormel of want of kind and generous indulgence; and Lord Erpingham decidedly blamed him. "However," said he, "as he is so cold-hearted, and so little disposed to make allowances for the pride and vanity of lovely and admired nineteen, I am glad you are separated, for you would never have been happy together. I declare I wish Julia and he could meet and fall in love with each other, he would be happier with her than with you, and she would be happier with him than with that strange capricious Marcus."

Poor Lady Helena had often said this herself, and she shuddered and turned pale when her father's opinion thus positively confirmed her's; how earnestly did she hope that Lord Restormel and Julia might never be thrown in each other's way! yet, if Julia joined Lord Aston abroad, they would meet in scenes of sorrow calculated to endear them to each other. The idea

was insupportable, and she, even she, the generous and disinterested Lady Helena, could not help wishing that something would occur to prevent an intimacy between Julia and Lord Restormel. While Lady Helena was weeping over the bare possibility of an event so destructive of all her future happiness, for neither Lord L. nor Netherby had for one instant weakened, by their attentions, the power of Lord Restormel over her heart; her footman announced the arrival of Marcus, who instantly followed him to her room.

"You here, Marcus! you here!" she exclaimed, "the bridegroom, I conclude, of Mrs. Tyrawley; do you not know that my father is in the house?"

"I do know it; but I care not. I am no bridegroom, nor ever shall be," he replied in a hurried manner, "except that injured angel—but where is she? I must and will see Julia directly!"

"Impossible; she will refuse to see you! but what has happened?"

"Happened! I have been saved from

destruction, from the snares of that despicable woman, Mrs. Tyrawley!"

"Oh, joyful tidings! well then, I hope Julia will see you, and I will go to her."

She did so; but scarcely had she opened the door when Marcus rushed into the room after her, in a frenzied manner, and threw himself at Julia's feet, and conjured her to listen to him, in order to save him from destruction! He then put Lucy's letter into her hands, and desired her to read it. With what sensations she did so I need not attempt to say, but long and most satisfactory to the heart of Julia, and Fortescue was the explanation that followed; and, as Julia was no longer afraid of exposing the life of Marcus, or of any one, by the disclosure, as his enemies were beneath his resentment, she brought all the wicked letters which had, during so many months, preyed on her peace, and blighted all her prospects; she had preserved them carefully, she said, that they might justify her strange, mysterious coldness when she was no more;

but the agitation even of recovered happiness was too much for her weak frame; and as soon as Lady Helena had prepared her father to receive her brother, Marcus left her to the tender care of his sister. The earl received his son with a cold, resentful manner, for he considered him as culpable in having so entirely set his opinion and wishes at defiance, in engaging to marry Mrs. Tyrawley; he also told him that he should think it his duty as a friend, to advise Julia not to receive him again as a lover, till he had undergone a long probation, especially as the rupture between them, and his being on the eve of marriage with another woman were well known; therefore, an immediate renewal between him and Julia would expose the latter to well deserved censure; and if Julia was wise, he thought she would not even allow him to correspond with her, but would prove his fidelity before she ever trusted him again. Julia, meanwhile, for the same reasons, and this additional one, that she did not feel at all

sure that Mrs. Tyrawley would not, by some means or other, again separate them, had resolved to refuse to accept a renewal of Captain Fortescue's addresses, and even if he left England, to refuse to correspond with him. Fortified in her resolution by the honourable advice of the earl, she, therefore, positively declared that she would neither see him nor correspond with him for twelve months, and should consider herself at liberty to accept the addresses of any other man; but it was so evidently an effort to her to do this, that Marcus hoped he should be able, through the influence of Lady Helena, to prevail on her to see him, or write to him long before that time elapsed,—and Marcus set off on a tour to the Highlands, to which was to succeed a tour entirely round Ireland; full of hope, though also full of grief and mortification, but pre-eminent over every other sensation, was that of gratitude to Heaven for his preservation from a fatal marriage, and even of gratitude to its agent, Lady Villeroy.

"But can I inflict no punishment on those wretches?" said Marcus, "the men are beneath my sword, and for using my horsewhip they could indite me for an assault."

"The wisest, as well as the most Christian way," replied the earl, "is to take no revenge, and let the matter die away in silence. Depend on it, some retributive justice attends bad actions here, and you will be revenged, without the guilt of revenging yourself."

"Oh, if this Aubrey marries Lady Villeroy, Marcus, you will be sufficiently revenged on him."

"Nay, Helena! remember the express."

"I do, and that she desired you to pay for it too." This was said with something of her former spirit, but it was only a flash of lightning through a dark cloud, for generally speaking, Lady Helena's countenance and manner bespoke a mind absent, joyless, restless: and the only expression of joy, which ever irradiated her dim eye, was called into it by seeing Julia gradually,

but surely recover her bloom and her *embonpoint*, now her mind was relieved of its burthen.

"If we remain any longer here, my dear child, it must be on your account Helena, for you are the invalid now," said her anxious mother.

"It is only my mind that suffers, and I am contented to suffer," replied Lady Helena, "as I was the author of my own miseries."

"With a little help," replied her mother, "but I believe you and Lord Restormel were both right, and that you will both be happier separated." Lady Helena still thought differently, but she was silent.

"Yes," resumed the countess, "I have said this in my letter to Lady Restormel."

"Have you written to her and told her all," cried Lady Helena turning pale: "Oh! I hope not!"

"Yes I have, and why not, my dear?"

"Oh! I hoped, I hoped she would die without the pain of knowing that." Here Lady Helena, too painfully affected to say

more, suddenly quitted the room, she had believed Lord Restormel would, if possible, not inform his mother that their union was at an end, if her death was as near as was apprehended, and it was agony to her to reflect that her own image, which was now so precious and bright in the memory of Lady Restormel, would become, probably, odious and overclouded. "Now then," said she to herself, "I had better answer her letter, which, hitherto, I have not been able to do; but I will throw myself on my feelings and what comes from my heart, will go, I flatter myself, directly to her's. She was confirmed in this resolution by a letter from Lady Aston, in which she said, 'Lady Restormel grows rapidly worse; but, I trust, Lord Restormel will arrive to night. She loves to speak of you, and does so with the tenderest affection. She admires as well as loves you, spite of your faults. 'Tell her,' she says, 'that though my nurses are kind and diligent, and one of them is the dear friend of my youth, I miss and pine after that

bright vision which soothed and saved me at Laurel Grove.' 'After this can I hesitate to write?' exclaimed Lady Helena. Still, delicacy and pride suggested objections to her writing; for if she wrote despondingly as well as affectionately, and she could only write as she felt, it would seem, and perhaps to Lord Restormel himself, as if she wished to gain his mother's interference in her favour, that she might be restored to his affection and his confidence. But she at last found out a method of satisfying the claims which the dying mother had on her attention, without forcing herself on the recollection of her son, and that was sending her letter enclosed to Lady Aston, and conjuring her to deliver it privately to Lady Restormel, and only on promise that its being written and delivered should be kept a secret from Lord Restormel. Lady Helena was sure, that not only Sophia's own delicacy would lead her to take every proper precaution to save her's, but that Lady Restormel herself would be honorably careful not to

lower her dignity even in the eyes of her son; accordingly she did venture to throw herself on her feelings, and to write a letter, which would, she trusted, be acceptable to those of the beloved and honored being to whom she wrote. As Lady Erpingham had in her letter disclosed that painful fact which she had wished concealed, Lady Helena thought it best to give Lady Restormel an accurate detail of all the circumstances, that she might do Lord Restormel that justice which he would be likely not to do himself. When she had finished, and sent this letter, her mind was considerably relieved, and it seemed as if her now habitual despondency had given way to hope—yet she would have found it difficult to say on what this hope was founded. When Lord Restormel arrived at Nice, his mother was a little revived, and she eagerly and tenderly enquired how he had left Lady Helena, generously regretting, at the same time, that his affection for her had forced him to leave England and the woman he loved. The hurried, evasive manner in

which Lord Restormel replied to these questions, soon made her suspect that all was not right; and not long after she received Lady Erpingham's letter, saying, that their engagement was dissolved. But Lady Erpingham gave no details; she only expressed her belief that the separation was for the happiness of both parties, and proved their wisdom. Lady Restormel, therefore, could not help naming the subject to her son, though she saw that he wished to avoid discussing it. Accordingly she showed him Lady Erpingham's letter, and begged him to give her all the explanation which she could not now be easy without receiving.

"Oh, spare me, spare me, dearest mother," was his agitated reply, "I am not the wise philosophical being that your friend seems to think me. Let it suffice that we are separated, and for good reasons, and that I do not blame Lady Helena."

He then quitted the apartment in evident distress, and Lady Restormel had not

the heart to resume the subject. In two or three days after, Lady Aston, obeying, in all respects, Lady Helena's injunctions, gave her letter privately to Lady Restormel.

"Dear, rash, but generous girl!" cried she, melting into tears as she read it, "truly have you said, that the mother would have been more indulgent than the son, and that had I been near him, that cold note, dissolving the engagement, would not have been written."

"I shall leave this letter with you," said Lady Aston, "as you mean to answer it; but I rely on your burning it as soon as your answer is written."

"You may trust me," she replied; "I will guard the delicacy and pride of Helena Fortescue as carefully as I would that of my own daughter; and as soon as you leave me, my answer shall be written, and her letter destroyed, though I own" she added, in a faltering voice, "it is most precious to me, and I should like to have kept it till all was over."

Lady Aston left her to fulfil her task, even sooner than she intended, for she was summoned to the little Everard, who was alarmingly worse, and in a few hours the unhappy father and Sophia were, by desire of the physicians, on the road to the baths of Pisa, as the only possible chance to save his wasting life.

"Admirable woman!" said Lady Restormel, as Sophia, having pronounced a hurried, but agonized adieu, had left her alone, "we shall meet no more in this world!"

She then wrote the kindest letter to Lady Helena, assuring her she had not over-rated the indulgence with which she would have viewed her errors, even had their most secret source been revealed, that source which she only hinted at, withheld by shame, as she said, from the disclosure. She also declared her fixed intention to write to her son, conjuring him to reflect on his hasty decision, and to retract it, assuring him that he would repent the surrender of this first and heartfelt attachment, and that he did not make suffi-

cient allowances for a young, beautiful, and admired woman. This letter, she said, he shall not receive till I am no more, and then it will come with added force, as an admonition from the grave. If then, as I suspect, my beloved girl, you still love Restormel, he will soon be with you, and my death will be the means of cementing that union, which it would have gladdened my life to behold. Oh, how welcome will this idea make death to me! But vain, alas, was the generous hope she thus so feelingly ex-expressed; she had scarcely written, sealed, and sent off her letter to the post, and burned Lady Helena's, when all her worst symptoms returned, and when her son came back from a short excursion into the country, he found her last moments rapidly approaching. It was, therefore, impossible for her to write, even one line, as she had kindly intended; and what was still more trying to her, she felt her powers of speaking forsaking her, while her mind retained its consciousness. Warm

and uppermost in that mind was the wish to bring about a reconciliation between her son and Lady Helena; but the desire she felt to do this, defeated its end, by the over-eagerness which it excited. "And hear me, Restormel," she could only say with difficulty, and at intervals. "Obey your dying mother; I know all the faults Lady Helena has committed; I conjure you to ask to see my letter to her—that's enough; and promise me you will no more think of—— oh! no—make my last moments happy by promising me you understand me. I am dying—speech fails—promise, promise—life— promise;" as she spoke she eagerly grasped his hand, and hung about his neck.

"I do promise solemnly—I promise to obey your will implicitly," was his faint and agitated answer. His mother fixed her eyes on his with a look of joy, while a sweet and benevolent smile played about her lips. The next moment her hands were clasped, and her eyes raised in prayer: "I shall die

happy now," she articulated, with great difficulty, and then fell back a corpse on the bosom of her son.

At first, that most affectionate of children was alive only to the bitter anguish of his loss; but when the earliest agonies of bereaved affection had a little subsided, he reflected with insupportable agony, that, in her care for his happiness, his mother had wrung from him a promise, in her dying moments, that he would never renew his engagement with the faulty Lady Helena; for thus he unfortunately, but naturally, misunderstood the meaning of what she said. And he knew how fondly his heart still yearned towards that erring, but tenderly-beloved being—and how carefully his memory recalled every proof of her love to him. Now, then, said he to himself, I am indeed desolate and alone in the world; I am no longer a son—I can never be a lover or a husband—and I care not how soon my spirit, my broken spirit, is required at the hands of him who gave it.

What a journey, what an agonizing journey was that of Lord Restormel, while he followed the corpse of his mother to England and to the vault of his ancestors.

## CHAP. XXIII.

Lady Helena, meanwhile, received, with delighted gratitude, and with a renewal of her fondest hope, the letter of Lady Restormel, though she at the same time wept with affectionate agony over it, as she thought that the generous heart which had dictated it, might, at that very moment, have beaten its last. Nor was it long before her worst fears were confirmed by a letter from Lady Aston; but her best hopes were excited at the same time, and she fully expected that as soon as Lord Restormel had performed every duty to his mother, and her memory, he would either by letter, or in person, renew his addresses, provided he yet retained any feeling of attachment to her. In the meanwhile the pleasure of her home was greatly impaired by the removal of Julia to another residence, as it was evident that propriety required she should do so, since her remaining in Lord

Erpingham's family would expose her to the charge of being on the watch to regain, if she could, the heart and hand of a lover, who appeared in the eyes of the world to have forsaken her for another woman. This was an apparent surrender of her dignity and delicacy, to which no member of Fortescue's family could wish to expose her. She, therefore, chose Mrs. Magnal, who was now a widow, and wanted a companion, for her guardian, and became an inmate of that lady's house, with her own establishment of servants and carriage.

During her town residence, Julia's benevolent nature had prompted her to seek out objects on whom she might, with propriety, bestow some of the vast wealth, which she could not, and wished not to spend upon herself: and very often accompanied by her own woman, one whom she hired of Mrs. Magnal, on discovering the turpitude of the first attendant, she used to visit the poor in the neighbourhood of Portman Square, where she resided, and

bestow on them Bibles and good books, as well as pecuniary favors. In one of these charitable walks she visited a lodger in the second floor of a green-grocer's house, and on her re-entering the shop, the mistress of it, said, "If I may make so bold, madam, I wish to say, that the person you have just visited is not the greatest object of charity in my house. The lodger on the first floor, being a reduced gentlewoman, is far more so."

"But what can I do for her?" replied Julia; "how can I assist a reduced gentlewoman, without wounding her feelings; if I can, I will; but tell me how?"

"Really, madam," said the good woman, "if the want of proper nourishment will not pull down pride, nothing can, and this poor lady is gone, I assure you; for when I told her I knew a rich young lady, who was very kind and charitable, she sighed, and said, 'Well, really, I feel so ill and so hungry, that I am willing to accept medical advice, and food from any one now;' and then, if you did but see her,

madam, she is so beautiful, and seems so unhappy, so penitent-like."

"Penitent!" cried Julia, starting, for the word sounded unpleasant in her ears, but her Christian feelings conquered the involuntary reluctance to see her, which she at first experienced, and Mrs. Tibbs eagerly ran to inform the poor invalid, that the good young lady was coming to visit her.

"I am glad of it," replied she, in a faint voice, "for I am so sunk, so faint for something I could like."

"Then pray walk in directly," said Mrs. Tibbs to Julia, who now entered the room, "you came at the right moment to-day, Miss Villeroy."

"Miss Villeroy!" wildly screamed out the trembling invalid; "Miss Villeroy! no, no, let me rather die, than be obliged to Miss Villeroy."

As she said this, she tried to escape into the next room, but Julia caught her arm, and forcibly detained her, while Mrs. Tibbs said—

"Dear me, Mrs. Tyrawley, why should you not be obliged to Miss Villeroy?"

"I suspected this," said Julia, nearly as pale as the wretched woman whom she held: "Leave us, if you please, Mrs. Tibbs, I find Mrs. Tyrawley does not know me."

As soon as they were alone, Mrs. Tyrawley fell at Julia's feet, and earnestly besought, not her aid, but her pardon.

"You shall have both," Julia replied; a sweet, complacent feeling, struggling with, and overcoming the power of sad and bitter recollections over her heart, and that heart full of thankfulness to Heaven for being thus permitted to have an opportunity of returning good for evil.

Long and affecting was the conversation which now took place. Lucy, won by the gentle kindness and Christian benevolence of Julia, told her the whole of her sad story. That, expecting to marry Fortescue, she had ran in debt, and having strong reasons to wish to avoid selling any of her principal, she had been forced to

pay her debts by instalments out of her small income, and had, therefore, not enough to procure herself advice or sufficient food; but she had nearly resolved to sell some of her few remaining hundreds, when Mrs. Tibbs had declared she would procure her assistance: "But little did I think," said Lucy, "that the good young lady was one whom I had endeavoured so cruelly to injure!" Julia found that what she had heard (but did not like to believe) was true. That Lady Villeroy had been convinced by Aubrey that he had spoken of her as he did only to blind the jealousy of Mrs Tyrawley—that she had married him secretly, having, however, taken care to tie up the greatest part of her fortune, and secure even her income to herself; that they had then gone abroad, and a few weeks afterwards Aubrey had left her, and was living on that part of the income which he could call his own, with a beautiful French girl, whom he had met on the continent, and that Lady Villeroy, almost

broken-hearted, was on her way to England.

"Does he know of your distress?"

"Oh, yes."

"And has he not sent you any relief?"

"No; he is too much engrossed with his new love to think of me."

Here she begged leave to change the conversation, as it brought on her difficulty of breathing. I shall only add, that Julia procured the wretched woman advice, and a nurse, and provided her with all she wanted. She also was unremitting in her visits to her, and by the time that Mrs. Tyrawley took to that bed from which she was never to rise again, it was with feelings of spiritual comfort such as she had never expected to experience, and which she owed to the kindness of Julia, and to the attendance of the amiable clergyman whom she prevailed upon to visit the penitent and dying sinner.

"What has happened to you, Julia?" said Lady Helena to her one day. "There

is an expression in your countenance every now and then, a sort of Heavenly expression, even though your eyes fill with tears, which I never saw in it before. Have you had a vision to tell you you are soon to be removed to Heaven?"

"No, Helena; but I have reason to think that I have been chosen as the humble instrument to send another sinner thither, and that makes me weep, though I am a fool to weep for what I am glad of."

"And pray whio is this brand plucked from the burning?"

"Go with me to visit her, and I will tell you, most willingly." They instantly set off for Mrs. Tyrawley's lodgings.

"Oh! Miss Villeroy, I am so glad you are come," cried Mrs. Tibbs, "the poor soul has been so bad! poor Mrs. Tyrawley, I thought she was gone!"

"Mrs. Tyrawley," cried Lady Helena, "is it she?" bursting into tears, while she gazed on the benign and touching countenance of Julia, as she said, "Will you not see her Helena?"

" Oh, yes," was her reply, as she caught Julia's hand to her lips, and followed her in silence to the chamber.

" Here is Lady Helena Fortescue come to visit you," said Julia, kindly ; " will you see her ?"

" Oh ! how good she is ! see her ! yes, did I not bear to see you ?" Lady Helena now stood at the foot of the bed, and almost started at seeing the wreck of what she had once known as consummate beauty !

" Lady Helena ! can you forgive all the uneasiness I have given your family ?" said Lucy, clasping her hands together. " And will you prevail on your noble brother to pardon all my wicked conduct towards him ?"

" He has pardoned it, I dare say, already."

" But, where is he ? if I could but see him ! but as he is not in England I know that would be impossible; besides, I am not worthy to inflict such pangs as the sight of me would occasion him." She then told Lady Helena, what she had be-

fore told Julia, that, spite of appearances, she had never really transgressed the bounds of chastity; but not, she owned, from either moral or religious restraint, but from the dread of lowering herself still more in the eyes of that man whom she had loved with such fatal and ill-requited tenderness. "He scorned my weakness in loving him," said she, "and despised my fidelity; but I could bear it all while I knew that he never did, nor ever should reproach me with any criminal indulgencies, and one day I hoped that my persevering, and I may say pure love, would have touched his heart, and that he would have married me; but he is now the husband of another, and I, I am on my death-bed!" Lady Helena and Julia were both excessively affected at this proof of the persevering nature of woman's love; though, as Lady Helena afterwards observed, where the affections are not under the regulation of religion and moral restraint, this faithful love is little better than a bad habit; they were also relieved

to find that the poor invalid was not as guilty as she might have been.

"We will see you again to-morrow," said Julia, when they rose to take leave.

"To-morrow! there will be no to-morrow here for me," replied Lucy.

"Then I will return again to-night."

"Blessings on you," said Lucy, "I shall then depend on seeing you; I know you would not leave your work of mercy uncompleted."

"You shall not return alone Julia," said Lady Helena, "I will accompany you." At night, just as the friends were setting off on their task of Christian love, a message arrived from Mrs. Tibbs to hasten their arrival. Lucy was sensible when they came, and her dying eyes lighted up with pleasure at sight of them, the clergyman, Julia's friend, was only just gone, and Lucy declared her mind to be freed of its terrors from the conviction that He, who died for man, was mighty to save, even to the uttermost. Julia threw herself on the bed beside her, and

raised her in her arms, and Lady Helena grasped her cold hand in her's, while the weeping Mrs. Tibbs stood at the foot of the bed; the struggle was not long, and a deep silence succeeded the last groan, broken only by the sobs of the kind-hearted landlady; Julia had fallen on her knees, and had hidden her face with her hands, while Lady Helena stood in silent, tearful contemplation of that being reposing in death, who was once so beautiful, and once so dear, so perniciously dear to the heart of her brother, and who by a singular ordination of retributive justice, was doomed to owe the comforts of her last days, hours, and moments, to the forgiving excellence of the woman whom she had most injured.

"The poor thing, I found, had no near relations in England, and no friends," said Julia, as she perused a paper given her by the dying woman, "therefore I shall not be sorry to have to execute her will; see," said she, "and if any thing can touch that

hard heart, this must; she preferred receiving alms to selling her little remaining property, that she might leave it entire to Mr. Aubrey, the interest to accumulate in my hands till he is in want, which she says he will be she knows, some time or other, so great is his extravagance; and here is a letter to him to tell him what she has done. Tell me, Helena, is there not something that one respects in this power of forgiving love?"

"Certainly."

"I am glad you say so; for I rejoice to be able to admire any thing in one so dear to your brother!"

"But if you admire this forgiving love in her, how much more must Marcus admire your's, which is of a much higher nature—your pure Christian love, Julia! what think you will Marcus say of that!"

"Nay, nay, talk not of weak earthly love in a scene like this, and while gazing on that poor, pale victim of it, for she told me Aubrey's cruelty at length broke

her heart—but there is yet another duty to perform:" as she said this, she gently closed the eyes of the dead.

"Julia," said Lady Helena, with efforts and broken accents, as she led her away from the chamber, her eyes blinded with no unpleasant tears, "I have been told that that is an office which it is soothing to the hand of fond affection to perform; but I am inclined to believe that your feelings, on reflection, for having performed it to a departed enemy, will be far more soothing, more enviable still."

Sweet and tranquillizing that night were the slumbers of both the friends, though they rose the next day to a renewal of tender and secret anxieties, but more particularly Lady Helena, for Julia knew Marcus was well—that he loved her, and longed earnestly for the time when he was again to be admitted to her presence; she also felt that, now the poor Lucy was no more, one obstacle to her complete happiness, as the wife of Fortescue, was for ever removed; but Lady Helena, too rest

less to remain long in a place, returned that day to Laurel Grove, yet not before she was provoked to some of her usual smiles, by Mrs. Magnal's comically expressed astonishment, at finding that the object of Julia's kindnesses and visits, and of Lady Helena's attendant sympathy, was that vile hussy who had used her so wickedly.

"This surprise comes of your aversion to reading," said Lady Helena, "you never look into a book, I believe."

"Indeed but I do; I read my Testament and my Prayer-book every Sunday," she replied.

"Indeed! then did you never read the Lord's prayer in them, and that forgiveness of injuries was a Christian's duty?"

"Lady Helena," cried the old lady, angrily, "I cannot argue with you, you are so wise and learned, child! but, I am sure it was almost wicked in Miss Villeroy to be so good to a vile hussy, whom the Almighty had so properly punished, as if she knew better than he."

Well, indeed, might poor Lady Helena

be restless and uneasy, for months succeeded to months, and no Lord Restormel came or wrote; she therefore naturally concluded that he had disregarded his mother's dying letter, because he loved her no longer. At this period, Lady Villeroy arrived in England, miserable, forlorn, and ill; and it was not long before she was indelicate and selfish enough to request that Julia would come and stay with her, and help to nurse her into health. Julia obeyed the summons in spite of a repetition of Mrs. Magnal's theological objections to such kindness to such a woman; and a friend of Mrs. Magnal's came to stay with her in Julia's absence. But, to return to Lord Restormel; when he had followed the remains of his beloved mother to the grave, he found Green Hills so desolate that he resolved to travel, but his mind had been so incessantly preying on his health, that he was seized with an alarming illness, and had several relapses; as the cause of his illness still continued, he was for months confined to his own house,

and during this enforced solitude, one single flash of light shone on the darkness of his mind.—Had he not misunderstood his mother's dying words? could so generous a woman have died with such a gleam of satisfied benevolence in her countenance, when she must have seen how reluctantly, and with what agony he gave the promise she asked? What could be the nature of her letter to Lady Helena, which she desired him to ask to see? and if he was not on terms with Lady Helena, how could he hope to see it; but then, the next minute, he concluded that this letter was one bequeathing, as it were, her prohibition of the union to Lady Helena, and shewing her how wisely she had acted in giving him up and not answering his letter, and that his mother thought Lady Aston could procure him a sight of it. Unfortunately, he did not see Lord and Lady Aston before he left Italy, and since then Sophia had been too much taken up with the dying Everard to write to or think of him; but whether this hope came to cheer

or to deceive him, he was resolved to go to London and see Miss Villeroy.

On the evening of his arrival he went to a coffee-house, which was opposite to a house lighted up, and crowded with brilliant company. As the evening was warm, the windows were thrown up, and some of the ladies came into the balcony. There were gentlemen at the door of the coffee-house, commenting on the ladies, as they appeared in sight, and one gentleman said to the other, "I declare, there is that once beautiful girl, Lady Helena Fortescue! How she is gone off! It is quite a wonder to see her at a party! but I see she is out of mourning."

"Who was she in mourning for?"

"For a cousin, it is said; but the mourning was so deep, that every body suspected it was from a feeling of respect for that haughty duchess Lady Restormel; for, they say, she pines after Restormel still."

"Indeed! well, perhaps so, for I find she has again refused Lord L., and Nether-

by also, but Lord Clanross is allowed to dangle after her; and it is said she will at last marry him if Restormel does not come forward again."

"Why did that go off?"

"I will tell you what I have heard as we walk along, for it is time to go over the way, and I wish to get there before Lady Helena goes, as I love to look at her."

So do I, thought Lord Restormel, hastening to the door, his heart agitated and softened to an almost unbearable degree by this conversation. She was still in the balcony, but alone there; and as the moon shone on her pale face, he thought he had never seen her so touchingly beautiful, so interestingly lovely!

And was such a woman to be resigned without an effort, and for why? on account of a mysterious, dying request of his mother, which he probably had misunderstood. Impossible! as she had worn mourning for his mother; and after staying to look at Lady Helena, till she disappeared leaning on the arm of Lord

Clanross, he went home, resolved to call on Miss Villeroy the next day.

In the meanwhile Lady Helena, who had come to London merely for that party, which was held at the house of a near relation, returned the next day to Laurel Grove, little thinking her lover had been so near her.

Lord Restormel kept his resolution, and called, though with a beating heart, on Julia at Lady Villeroy's. Julia received him with a warmer welcome than he expected, and than perhaps his treatment of her friend warranted; but she was then living where she was much tried in every respect, and the sight of Lord Restormel brought with it tender and dear recollections which warmed her heart towards him. She had just heard also some pleasing intelligence of Marcus, and of his feelings on hearing of her conduct to Mrs. Tyrawley, which Lady Helena had communicated to her in a letter that day; and her heart was so opened, that on Lord Restormel's venturing to ask if she could

tell him where Marcus was, and whether their engagement was renewed, he led her to give him some particulars of the whole affair; but, as Lady Villeroy summoned her away, she was forced to put off telling him the rest till the next evening, when she wished him to call, as then Lady Villeroy would be gone to bed. He came; and Julia, attended by her servant, walked with him in the Regent's Park. Again and again he came, both in the morning and evening; and again Julia and he walked in the same scene, but still he dared not name the subject nearest his heart, withheld by the dread of having his fears confirmed; and Julia was withheld by delicacy from naming her friend to him. But these walks and meetings had been observed and talked about. Mrs. Seebright wrote word to Lady Helena that Lord Restormel was in town, and there was no doubt but that he was courting Miss Villeroy, as they were always together. At this intelligence—at the idea that the intimacy and attachment which she always

dreaded, had taken place, Lady Helena felt that she had never suffered till now; for now jealousy, and well-founded jealousy too, had taken possession of her heart!—to remain at Laurel Grove, was impossible; and as Mrs. Magnal was not well, and missed Julia, she had a sufficient excuse for hastening to London. When there, she made a desperate effort, and called directly on Julia, who seemed, she thought, embarrassed and hurried in her manner, and did not name Lord Restormel.

Before they parted Lady Helena said, "Have you nothing interesting to communicate to me?"

"Not now, but I very soon may have," was Julia's blushing reply, "and something you little think of."

"Indeed!" was Lady Helena's answer, as she hurried into her carriage. When there, she gave way to an agony of feeling, for were not Julia's words confirmatory of her apprehensions?

That evening she consented to accom-

pany Mrs. Seebright in a drive to the Regent's Park, to enable her to detect (as that lady said,) her perfidious friend at once. They did, and saw Julia and Lord Restormel, who were so engrossed with each other, that the carriage passed unheeded by them! Oh! the surpassing agony of that moment to Lady Helena. But her trials had taught her a lesson of humility; and while she humbled herself that night, before the being who thus chastised her, she reflected that both Julia and Lord Restormel were free to love and to marry; that Julia was not aware she still loved Lord Restormel, as she had forbidden her even to name him to her, and she knew that she had been prevailed on to let Lord Clanross try his chance of success with her. Julia was, therefore, not to blame; and, perhaps, she meant to confide in her the next time they met.

"Well, then, let me go to her, and end my suspense at once," said Lady Helena! "for to live thus is impossible!"

It so happened, that Lord Restormel

had mentioned the long dreaded subject to Julia, on the morning on which Lady Helena had called; and though Julia had been summoned away very soon, he went home relieved, and almost happy; he was to return in the evening, to walk in the Park, as usual, and he did so; and was so engrossed by the joy of hearing what his mother's letter was, and Julia, in witnessing that joy, that neither he nor Julia saw or heard any thing.

"I will get my copy of the letter and show you," said she.

"Not for the world," he replied—"she shall not suppose that aught but my own heart carries me to her;" and he called the next day to ask Julia to accompany him to Mrs. Magnal's; Julia had promised to go with him, and prepare Lady Helena to receive him with such prompt kindness, that, in a transport of grateful joy, as he sat by her on the sofa, he raised her hand passionately to his lips.

At this moment Lady Helena, who had walked to Gloucester Place, and had found

the door open, and no servant to announce her, entered the room! At sight of this tender familiarity, she started, staggered, and exclaiming, "Then it is so!" would have fallen to the earth, had not Lord Restormel caught her and carried her to the sofa. When she recovered, and found where her head reclined, she started up; but, making a great effort, she seized a hand of each, and joining them together, lifted up her eyes to heaven, faintly saying, "Heaven bless you together!" and attempted to leave the room; but Julia quitted the room before her, and she felt she was detained by the grasp of Lord Restormel, who, bearing her back to the sofa, exclaimed, "Oh, Helena! my own Helena! my only love! could you, for a moment, suspect that I loved another woman?"

Surprised, gratified, overpowered, Lady Helena leaned against the bosom of her lover; and when Julia returned to them at the end of two hours, all was explained; past misery made amends for; and present happiness, encreased by the conscious-

ness that more was now in store for them.

"Oh, Miss Villeroy!" cried Lord Restormel, "how hard it was that my second letter should be received, and not my first:" "I, on the contrary, believe, that on all occasions, every thing is for the best."

"My dear Lord," replied Julia, "this enforced separation has proved the constancy of you both; and the misery which my dear friend has experienced—misery, self-inflicted, as she has always humbly called it, has taught her a lesson, by which she will be benefitted in future."

"But then, had my letter been received, my dear mother would have died happy in the conviction that we should be united!"

"She did die happy then," cried Lady Helena, "for she certainly believed that you understood her, and that you promised to reconcile yourself to me. Oh! dear Restormel! presume not for one moment to question the mercy and the wisdom of him who over-rules all events for our good, if we could and would but think so!"

"I do feel it, and I own that I have great pleasure in thinking that the misery which some undetected carelessness in my agent, to whom I gave my letter, inflicted on me, gave me an opportunity of proving my obedience to the will and wishes of the best of parents, at even the very last moment of her consciousness; she deserved such submission from me, and this recollection will cheer me to the last hour of my existence."

"After all," said Lady Helena, trying to turn Lord Restormel's attention from the recollection of a scene which even yet had power to unman his filial heart, "I am the only person who have reason to repine, because what I have endured has made me so ugly. When we parted, Restormel, I was in the pride of my beauty."

"Yes, and also in the pride of your heart, Helena! and that pride destroyed the power of your beauty over my heart. Foolish girl! you treated me as if I were a mere sensualist! and as if my moral sense was not superior to my other senses! Oh,

Helena, what dependence could you or any other woman have on the love and fidelity of a man who could be fascinated by the charms of a woman into a comparative disregard of her mental and moral qualities! and my resentment of what you did, and looked at Clifton, was a homage to your real worth, which was worthy your acceptance! but I am sure you feel on this subject as I do, and I shrink from any renewal of it as a degradation to you, which you have risen above."

"Generous and kind, and like yourself! but come, let us give our high-flown feeling a little set down by going to my present hostess, good Mrs. Magnal; I am sure she will pull down all our heroics," said Lady Helena. Accordingly they set off for Grosvenor Square; when they arrived there, Lady Helena feelingly exclaimed—"Oh how much happier do I return than when I left this house!" Mrs. Magnal eagerly pressed forward to tell Lady Helena how glad she was to see her returned, and how long she had thought her absence,

as she had promised to return soon; but her welcome died away on her lips when she saw Lord Restormel, and she sunk back on her seat in amazed silence; at last, however, his kind enquiries after her health, wrung from her some gracious enquiries in return; but after earnestly regarding him and Lady Helena, she exclaimed—"Grant me patience! what two fine-looking young persons, I remember you! but now, I declare my lord, you look with your black dress and pale face just like an undertaker, and Lady Helena—"

"Like an undertaker's wife, I hope," he replied, raising Lady Helena's hand to his lips.

"Dear me! well is it possible, after such strange doings! but I know that young people will have their own way, and strange ways they often are. Oh! poor, dear Lord Clanross! but I conclude, Lady Helena, you mean to consult your father."

"To be sure, and I too," said Lord Restormel.

"Well, luckily Lord and Lady Er-

pingham are coming to town to-day, and are to dine *en famille* with me."

"*En famille!* then I fear I must not expect to be admitted, but after dinner I trust I may request an audience of the earl.

"Nay, before I trust, and if my father invites you, I trust our dear friend here will not exclude you from our table."

"No, certainly not, if he invites you my lord; but if he does, he is more forgiving than I am," replied the ingenuous old lady, and Lord Restormel withdrew. It is almost unnecessary to add that Lord Erpingham received Lord Restormel's communications with complacency, and that the latter dined *en famille* at Mrs. Magnal's; but nothing could induce Lady Villeroy to allow Julia to join the party. She declared that she should die if she were to leave her, as she felt herself so decidedly worse that any contradiction would kill her. In vain, therefore, did Julia's friends try to convince her that she was weakly forging unnecessary fetters for herself in thus in-

dulging the tyrannical caprice of one who had no claims either on her love or her duty; and who had, on the contrary, done all in her power to imbitter to her the hours of childhood and of youth; and what, said they, could you do more for a fond, excellent, and beloved parent.

"Oh, much more!" she replied, "for I should love such a parent, and then the sacrifice would be no sacrifice, but a pleasure; but the less poor Lady Villeroy deserves of me the more I feel it right in me to oblige her, especially as, if I do not, nobody else will."

Happy are those who are habituated to make a little surrender of their own will, convenience and pleasure, from consideration for the comfort, or even caprice of others. They have a secret satisfaction in so doing, and in so having done, far beyond any gratification which the pleasure they surrender could have imparted; and Julia, while engaged in administering to the comfort of her unamiable mother-in-

law, felt, I doubt not, more heartfelt satisfaction than she would have enjoyed in the society which she loved.

But Fortescue now ventured to return, and Julia consented to see him; nor was it long before she also consented to be his bride on the day that should unite his friend to Lady Helena; but Lady Villeroy hoped they would wait till she was no more; and Julia felt the sense of her duty, therefore, tired to the uttermost, when the unexpected return of Aubrey—returned, he hypocritically said, to nurse his dear, but injured wife himself—made it imperative on Julia to leave Gloucester Place, and with the full approbation of the flattered, duped, and jealous mistress of the house. Aubrey did stay with her, and did nurse her in order to regain, if possible, possession of her confidence, and thereby of her money and valuables; and having done so, in a degree, he took advantage of her first quarrel with him to leave her again. The consequence to her was fatal, she broke a blood-vessel by the violent paroxysm of

rage to which she gave way, and died soon after, but not before Julia reached the house, whom she was very desirous of seeing, and to whom she expressed the most affectionate gratitude for all her kindness, imploring, at the same, time her forgiveness for all that she had ever done to wound or distress her. "I have not deserved such goodness from you, and to die here," she faintly murmured, as Julia tenderly raised her in her arms. She spoke no more, but with her head on Julia's bosom she gently breathed her last.

To the joy of every one, her vile husband was not named in her will, which was of recent date, but, with the exception of a few legacies, she left every thing to Julia, who feelingly observed, "You see this poor soul had a heart alive to kindness, and how glad I am that I was not prevailed upon to leave her, or to refuse to indulge even her caprices."

"Mercenary wretch! no doubt you are glad," cried Lady Helena, "for I see now you were legacy-hunting—there's a dear

girl; do not say what you have just said to any one but me, all things considered." And Julia, who was amused herself by her own equivocal observation, promised to say no more.

Lord and Lady Aston returned to England, having lost the dear object of so many months of anxious solicitude; but the little Everard had not long been buried when Lady Aston gave birth to a son, another Everard; and Lord Erpingham could not help owning, that much as he loved and regretted the first heir, he was not sorry to have the future representative of his house born of a woman who had moral and mental qualities of the first order to transmit to her descendants, and who would be able to form their infant minds to virtue,—for he well knew that, generally speaking, where men or women are distinguished for mental and moral excellences, they have had, for the most part, a wise and virtuous mother. It may be as well for me to notice the fate of the other characters named in these pages, and to say

that Mansfeldt was at last thrown into the King's Bench, where he formed an acquaintance with a widow lady, and which he intended to break off as soon as he and she should, by an act of grace, obtain their liberty: but as a marriage was become necessary to save the lady's reputation, he was forced to marry her by a bullying brother. The consequence was, that when by an unexpected legacy he was able to shew his face in some of the second-rate circles in which he had been formerly known, he soon found, that though he was willing enough to leave at home a wife who was too ignorant and too vulgar for him to take abroad with him, she was not willing to be left, and that in order to enjoy any sort of domestic peace he must quit England, and drag his chain in a foreign country. There he resumed his habit of gaming, was again a beggar, and was likely to end his days in a foreign prison.

Aubrey soon realized those fears, for his pecuniary embarrassments which the

affectionate fears of Mrs. Tyrawley had anticipated, and her careful affection had provided against;—and on a certification of his poverty, Julia paid into his hands, by means of her agent, the principal and interest of the sum left him by that unhappy woman. But they were soon squandered like the rest of his property, and, in a fit of despair, his own rash hand deprived him of that life which the gallows had spared.

Mrs. Benson soon contrived nearly to ruin her husband, and on what remained of their property they were forced to reside in a foreign country.

Netherby, on Lady Helena's marriage, joined his declining and destitute father in America, and sought the best remedy for any affliction—the fulfilment of a sacred duty; and by administering to the comfort of his erring parent, he, no doubt, ultimately secured his own.

Lord Clanross fell in love with a new beauty, and at length made her his wife. And soon after the arrival of Lord and

Lady Aston in England, Lady Helena was united to Lord Restormel, and Fortescue at the same time received the hand of Julia Villeroy.

THE END.

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*In the Press,*

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